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# What Is Parenthood?: Contemporary Debates about the Family Introduction

Linda McClain

*Boston University School of Law*, [lmclain@bu.edu](mailto:lmclain@bu.edu)

Daniel Cere`

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# **WHAT IS PARENTHOOD?: CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ABOUT THE FAMILY**

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**Linda C. McClain** (editor)  
Boston University School of Law

**Daniel Cere** (editor)  
Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University

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# **What Is Parenthood?**

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## ***Contemporary Debates about the Family***

EDITED BY

**Linda C. McClain and Daniel Cere**



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*Linda C. McClain and Daniel Cere*

This book had its genesis in a conversation between the editors, Linda McClain and Daniel Cere, about why and how we differed in our understandings of and convictions about family and marriage and how these differences seemed to turn on contrasting underlying models of parenthood. As we examined these issues further, and decided to pursue them in the present volume, we learned much from valuable conversations with our contributors, whose different disciplinary perspectives helped to shape the volume. We thank them for their dedication to this project. Reading and editing their chapters has deepened our own understandings of the many facets of parenthood.

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## Introduction

*Linda C. McClain and Daniel Cere*

Extraordinary changes in patterns of family life—and family law—have dramatically altered the boundaries of parenthood and opened up numerous questions and debates. What is parenthood and why does it matter? How should society define, regulate, and support it? Despite this uncertainty, however, the intense focus on the definition and future of marriage diverts attention from parenthood. Further, demographic reports suggesting a shift away from marriage and toward alternative family forms keep marriage in constant public view, obscuring the fact that disagreements about marriage are often grounded in deeper, conflicting convictions about parenthood.

*What Is Parenthood?* asks bold and direct questions about how to think about, support, and regulate parenthood.<sup>1</sup> We begin with the institutional question: Is parenthood separable from marriage—or couplehood—when society seeks to foster children’s well-being? We then turn to other issues: What is the better model of parenthood from the perspective of child outcomes? How should the rights of adults and of children shape the law of parenthood? How do children form secure attachment to parents, and how significant is biology to that process? How do gender equality and gender difference shape the law and social practice of parenthood? Are there gender differences in parenting, and, if so, should difference make a difference? What are the implications for the meaning of parenthood and family life of immigration and its giving rise to forms of transnational parenting? Finally, given the significant changes in patterns of family life, what directions should family law and public policy concerning parenthood take?

The book brings together an interdisciplinary group of distinguished scholars to investigate these questions and debates about parenthood in contemporary society. For each question, the book provides two responses from experts with different perspectives, who are, generally, from different disciplines. Law, admittedly, is the disciplinary center of gravity, but the volume brings into conversation scholars from law, anthropology,

globalization and immigration studies, medicine, psychology, religious ethics, and sociology. This interdisciplinary approach allows competing perspectives on critical issues pertinent to parenthood. In addressing these issues, our contributors also offer different perspectives on related questions, such as the role of empirical research and evidence in debates over parenthood and the family.

As an organizing device, we use two contrasting models of parenthood: the *integrative model* and the *diversity model*. We offer them as a guiding framework subject to refinement, rather than as rigid constructs describing two polarized camps. Indeed, within this book, there are creative tensions over whether it is possible to delineate two contrasting models. There is a considerable amount of nuance and plasticity within what we call these integrative and diversity approaches, but we nonetheless believe that the models are helpful and avoid many of the available reductive dichotomies, such as for and against, liberal versus conservative, modern versus traditional. Therefore, we use the two models to elucidate the challenging tensions within academic discourse and public debate about parenthood.

Generally, for each question posed, one response approaches the question from the perspective of the integrative model and the other, from that of the diversity model.<sup>2</sup> Many collections on family issues gravitate toward the conservative, liberal, or feminist pole. By contrast, this book deliberately brings together scholars from different points along the spectrum. We offer the two models as an organizing device, and many contributors vigorously defend or criticize one or the other model. Some contributors also illuminate tensions in family life and family law between these two models. However, some contributors challenge the utility of this two-model approach and propose alternative frameworks.

### **The Integrative and Diversity Models and Their Usefulness**

The *integrative model* of parenthood (as elaborated by Daniel Cere in chapter 1) reflects a traditional, and still common, understanding of parenthood as a natural relation following from biological reproduction by one man and one woman within marriage (or legal adoption within marriage). We call this view *integrative* because it regards marriage—between one man and one woman—as the central social institution for integrating sexuality, reproduction, and parenthood so that children grow up with their two biological parents. Proponents of the integrative model describe it as a *conjugal model* to emphasize that it is a male-female model of parenting

and assumes a certain social ecology of adult pair-bonding, sex difference, and adult-child relationships. Although some appeal to religious convictions to justify the integrative model, many eschew explicit appeal to religion and find support for the model in academic fields like evolutionary psychology, kinship studies, and biological anthropology.

The integrative model emphasizes the importance of biological connection, the significance of sex difference, and the need—indeed, the right—of children to two biological parents: their mother and father. It urges caution about the growing use of assisted reproductive technology (ART) because of the separations this technology introduces between biology and parenthood and, often, between marriage and parenthood. Generally, its proponents oppose opening up civil marriage to same-sex couples because this change will weaken the basic idea that each child should have a mother and a father.<sup>3</sup> However, some support second-parent adoption for same-sex couples because formal ties between parents and children better foster child well-being than informal ones. The role of law, in the integrative model, is to assist in channelling human bonding and reproduction toward the institution of marriage in a way that integrates the many biological and social goods of parenthood.<sup>4</sup> Some proponents of the integrative model, nonetheless, now support same-sex marriage in light of other goods at stake (such as fairness and the dignity and equal citizenship of gay men and lesbians). They call for exploring possible coalitions between straight people and gay men and lesbians on strengthening marriage as an institution, embracing a norm of marital parenthood as best for children, and thinking carefully about the use of ART.<sup>5</sup>

The *diversity model* (as elaborated by Linda McClain in chapter 2) recognizes and responds to the growing diversity in patterns of family life. It acknowledges various pathways to parenthood. It often includes a normative judgment that this diversity has value. It defines parenthood more by reference to the quality of the relationship—or, to use a psychological concept, attachment—between adult and child than to whether a marital relationship exists between two opposite-sex adults or a biological tie between adult and child. It recognizes that adult-adult intimate relationships often produce and may be linked to parent-child bonds, as in marriage. However, it also recognizes that adult-adult intimate bonds are not always the anchor of parent-child bonds; some parent-child bonds form and flourish outside of marriage or other adult intimate relationships.

The diversity model tends to focus on family *function* rather than family *form*. The legal category of parent, on this model, properly includes

persons who function as parents even if they lack a biological or formal connection to a child. It also stresses adult autonomy and responsibility and the basic right of children to healthy attachments and good parenting, rather than a basic right to biological parents or parents who satisfy certain formal requirements. This model embraces family law's gender revolution away from hierarchical, fixed gender roles for spouses and parents and toward equality as a basic norm.<sup>6</sup> It de-emphasizes the significance of sex difference and gender complementarity and is skeptical of claims that every child needs a mother and a father for optimal development. The role of law, on the diversity model, is to recognize and support the diverse array of contexts in which bonded parent-child relationships may arise. To be sure, the diversity model is a big tent. There is considerable disagreement among those who agree that the integrative model is too narrow in its approach to parenthood. Some proponents of the diversity model share with the integrative model the conviction that marriage is a valuable way to integrate intimate adult bonds and parent-child bonds; however, for them, this is a reason to support, rather than to oppose, marriage by same-sex couples. Other proponents criticize family law's focus upon marriage and urge that society should support a broader range of intimate adult relationships. Still other diversity proponents contend that, given the vicissitudes of adult intimate relationships, society should focus on and support parenthood—and the needs of children—rather than on integration of intimate and parenting bonds.

These models of parenthood often coexist in uneasy tension with one another. Public opinion surveys report both notable recognition of family diversity and considerable ambivalence about it. A Pew Research Center survey, *The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families*, found that majorities of Americans define “family” in a way that includes family forms that clearly do not fit into the integrative model of parenthood—married, heterosexual parents (by biology or adoption). To be sure, nearly 99 percent of those surveyed deem a married couple with children a family. Yet very large majorities also recognize family forms that depart from the integrative model and move toward the diversity model: 86 percent consider a single parent with children a family, 80 percent, an unmarried couple with children. Moreover, a sizable majority (63 percent) considers a same-sex couple with children a family.<sup>7</sup> These survey responses suggest, as the report notes, that although “the portrait of the American family circa 2010 starts where it always has—with mom, pop and the kids . . . the family

album now includes other ensembles.”<sup>8</sup> However, recognition that greater family diversity exists does not translate in all cases to acceptance of such change. The survey found that 69 percent of respondents view with concern the trend of more single women having children. The public is more divided over other forms of family diversity, with a large minority (43 percent) believing that the trends of more unmarried couples and more gay and lesbian couples raising children are bad for society, while an equally large minority say that they are neither good nor bad. Further, different segments of the public (based on gender, age, religiosity, and race) hold different views about whether children need a home with both a mother and a father.<sup>9</sup>

This book is also pertinent to contemporary debates over the legal regulation of marriage. It attempts to provide a balanced and critical overview of the ways in which different conceptions of parenthood shape debates over marriage. An instructive example is provided by the ongoing legal and political struggles in the United States over whether states should open up civil marriage to same-sex couples. State courts that have rejected the constitutional challenges brought by same-sex couples have presupposed the integrative model of parenthood.<sup>10</sup> State courts that have accepted such challenges have rejected this model to the extent it would limit marriage to opposite-sex couples, stressing the equal capacity of same-sex couples to be spouses and parents. Instead, the latter courts have recognized the diversity of pathways to becoming a parent and concluded that research indicates that gay and lesbian parents are as effective as heterosexual parents at rearing children and that parental effectiveness is not related to sexual orientation.<sup>11</sup> Further, as state legislatures wrestle with the marriage issue, the underlying role of competing models of parenthood is evident.<sup>12</sup> As elaborated in chapter 2, claims about the irrelevance of gender to parental capacity and child outcomes played a critical role in the successful federal constitutional challenge brought by same-sex couples to California’s Proposition 8. Competing models of parenthood are also critical to ongoing legal challenges to the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and to congressional debate over whether to repeal DOMA. By posing a range of questions about parenthood, this volume avoids focusing only on what gets the most airtime in debates over parenthood: family form. To be sure, it does ask whether family form matters, but it also asks many other questions concerning critical, but often overlooked, aspects of contemporary parenthood.

## Overview of the Book

In part I, we offer the working hypothesis that the integrative and diversity models of parenthood provide a fruitful framework for making sense of contemporary debates about parenthood and addressing the significant questions about parenthood taken up by our contributors.

In chapter 1, Daniel Cere argues that developments in the fields of attachment theory, kinship studies, and evolutionary psychology resonate with an integrative approach to parenthood, which emphasizes the importance of human pair-bonding and kinship bonds and the evolutionary roots of attachment.<sup>13</sup> He looks closely at what these fields suggest about the critical importance of attachment and kinship bonds for human development. He contends that this research suggests significant convergence on a “substantive set of principles” across lines of debate over parenthood concerning the needs and rights of children, the duties of adults, and the obligation of society and the state to facilitate adults’ capacity to meet children’s needs. He then identifies some likely areas of disagreement between proponents of the integrative and diversity models about further implications of this research. Canvassing recent scholarship, he elaborates several features of human kinship systems and explains their import for the integrative model. He concludes by examining how this research might inform parenthood debates and translate into legal arguments about the “unique web of rights associated with childhood.”

In chapter 2, Linda McClain sets forth the diversity model of parenthood.<sup>14</sup> She looks first at social practice, canvassing diverse pathways to parenthood, and then at family law, showing the law’s evolution toward more diversity in defining and supporting parenthood. She acknowledges the continuing hold of an integrative model in public opinion (if not always in practice) and in family law. She explains the normative foundations of the diversity model as well as how changes in constitutional, criminal, and family law, and in women’s economic status in society, have facilitated greater family diversity. Government, she argues, should recognize and support different forms of family, and she identifies different perspectives within the diversity model over questions of law and policy, such as the continuing place of marriage and whether and how closely to link adult-adult intimate bonds to parent-child bonds. She also sketches diversity (or disagreement) within the integrative model. She proposes that, given variations within both models, the image of a continuum might better help to map competing conceptions of parenthood in contemporary



debates about family life and family law and what is best for adults, children, and society.

Part II takes up the question of institutions supporting parenthood: Is parenthood separable from marriage (or couplehood) when it comes to fostering child well-being? Sociologist Judith Stacey, in chapter 3, argues that the terms *singular* (or *universalist*) and *pluralist* better describe the contrasting perspectives on family change and family diversity.<sup>15</sup> She demonstrates the ethnographic character of the institutional question by drawing on field research on the matrilineal Mosuo culture of southwestern China and polygamy in South Africa—two radically different examples of family systems that do not presume that child welfare depends upon monogamous, heterosexual marriage. She criticizes the exaggerated emphasis that the integrative perspective places on the role of marriage in promoting child welfare and argues instead for greater social responsibility to enable successful parenting in all of its diverse forms.

In chapter 4, anthropologist Peter Wood also takes up the example of the Na (or what Stacey calls the Mosuo) in defending the opposite point: societies are generally and preferentially organized to provide each child with an acknowledged mother and father who bear responsibility for raising the child.<sup>16</sup> This proposition about the normative structure of human societies, he argues, does not deny that the actual arrangements societies employ to nurture, provide for, and educate children are diverse or that various external constraints sometimes compromise the underlying preferential pattern for assigning each child a mother and father. He argues, however, that while all human societies have “fictive kin” arrangements to address these exceptional circumstances, these are better understood as exceptions to the fundamental pattern than as evidence that the postulated pattern is an inaccurate generalization. He illustrates with two ethnographically documented cases of extreme deviations from the pattern of assigning a child a single mother and a single father: the Na and the Nayars of nineteenth-century India. He also addresses other ethnographic departures from the integrative model of parenthood.

Part III addresses the critical question of rights: What rights of adults and children are at stake in defining and regulating parenthood? Do adults have a right to a child? Do children have rights to their biological parents? How do human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), illuminate these questions? Religious ethicist Don Browning and legal scholar David Meyer both consider the UDHR, the CRC, and the

rights of parents and children in family law, but they reach different conclusions as to how they bear on models of parenthood.

In chapter 5, Browning develops an integrative view of children's rights based upon the natural law tradition in Christian thought.<sup>17</sup> He reconstructs this tradition to address two questions: How should we ground the rights of children, especially in light of the rights of parents? What can Christianity contribute to answering that question? He contends that the natural law tradition (which integrated and used many non-Christian sources, such as notions of kin altruism) emphasizes the biological relatedness and marriage of a child's parents as central to the rights of children, both legal and religious. Law and religion, he argues, should cooperate in maximizing the possibility that the reproductive rights of adults are realized in ways that protect the rights of children to be raised by the parents who conceived them and to ensure that this happens within legally institutionalized marriage. He shows the prominence of this view in major international human rights documents, such as the UDHR and the CRC. Browning also criticizes family law's move away from this natural law tradition and toward a diversity model.

In chapter 6, David Meyer asks whether the rights of children or adults require the state to enlarge the concept of parenthood to accommodate an expanding universe of family forms (as the diversity model would support) or, instead, aggressively to channel child rearing into the traditional, marital, two-parent, mother-father model of parenthood.<sup>18</sup> He concludes that the rights of children and those of adults do not require adherence to any single model of parenthood, whether oriented around biology, marriage, adult intentions, or any other polestar. Children's rights and those of adults do put modest constraints on the state's choices in defining the parent-child relationship, but the limits are broad, evolving, and multidimensional. Basic rights inevitably require some diversity in parenthood, but they do not compel public acquiescence in whatever child care arrangements upon which adults may agree. Resort to rights talk, Meyer argues, cannot spare society the need to grapple with the fundamental policy questions that must guide the exercise of democratic choice. He illustrates his thesis by examining the rights of children in the CRC, the rights of adults and children in the UDHR and the European Convention on Human Rights, and judicial constructions of parenthood in U.S. constitutional law.

In part IV, contributors address the question of child outcomes and parenthood: Does one model of parenthood produce, on average, better

outcomes for children or for society? What light does social science shed on the parenthood—and family forms—debates? In chapter 7, legal scholar Margaret Brinig makes a case for the integrative model of parenthood and for supporting the formal, legally recognized statuses of husband/wife and parent/child.<sup>19</sup> Drawing on the existing literature and on her own research on different-sex couples, she argues that, in general, children do better in the short and long term if they live with married parents and if they are biological or adopted children of these parents. Using mixed-race marriages as an example, she explains the importance of different factors for child outcomes, such as the stability and permanence of relationships and parental warmth. She also explains the importance of community, which includes the formal community denoted by legal status, the family's religious community, and the peer community, which particularly influences older children. For example, black children seem to be affected by formal legal relationships far less than other racial groups in the United States, and she concludes that the reason may be the support provided by the mother's religiosity. She also considers that stable marriages may provide a buffer for fathers who, on their own, may prefer sons to daughters, as the reported cases involving relocation by custodial parents suggest.

In chapter 8, psychologist Fiona Tasker looks at developmental outcomes for children raised by lesbian and gay parents.<sup>20</sup> She observes that, for policy makers, whether or not children brought up in nontraditional family structures are disadvantaged, unaffected, or even advantaged in their development has been a key concern in whether to change the law to recognize and support lesbian and gay parenting. She first canvasses the pathways to parenthood by gay men and lesbians (such as adoption, the use of ART, and after heterosexual separation or divorce), and the extent to which current legal regimes support those pathways. She then provides an overview of key studies of children brought up by lesbian and gay parents, pointing out limitations in prior studies and how more recent studies provide probative evidence that children reared by lesbian and gay parents do not fare worse than children reared by heterosexual or opposite-sex parents. These studies generally are consistent with the diversity model's claim that family form in and of itself makes little difference to child well-being; instead, what matters are quality of parenting, access to resources, and the social systems surrounding the family. She concludes that further legal change is necessary to support different routes to family formation and to recognize and meet the needs of children in diverse families.

Part V turns to the question of how children form secure attachment to their parents or other caregivers—a vital component of child development. How much does a biological connection between parent and child matter to this process? What sort of factors foster and hinder secure attachment? Psychoanalyst John Bowlby’s pioneering work on attachment provides a point of departure for both chapters in this part. However, the chapters contrast sharply in their basic or “take-home” messages about fashioning public policy about parenthood informed by the literature on attachment.

In chapter 9, an interdisciplinary group of authors from medicine, psychology, and religious ethics—Terence Hébert, Ellen Moss, Daniel Cere, and Hyun Song—explore the biological and psychological bases of attachment.<sup>21</sup> First explaining the biological bases of attachment relationships at a molecular, cellular, and genetic level, they contend that the intricate interconnections between pair-bonds and developmental processes are consistent with Bowlby’s original theories of the biological bases of the attachment system and its evolutionary function. Then, they offer a more organismic, behavioral and social focus upon attachment. They identify and interpret qualitatively different child-parent attachment patterns within an evolutionary framework and the role of secure and insecure attachment relationships in promoting survival of offspring. What are the implications, they ask, of psychological research findings for child welfare policy and attachment-based intervention models? Finally, they call for rigorous research on attachment, but also conclude that the evidence concerning the evolution of complex biological and kinship patterns makes a strong case for caution with respect to changes in parenting structures and practices that would promote freedom, equality, and diversity in family forms without attention to the effects of such policies on children.

In chapter 10, psychologists Howard Steele and Miriam Steele strike a tone of confidence about what is known concerning human attachment, based on fifty years of systematic research since Bowlby’s pioneering work, and how this attachment research may assist public policy. Attachment security, they argue, overrides any particular mode of conception and allows any child to thrive if she or he receives consistent sensitive care from at least one adult who assumes parental responsibility.<sup>22</sup> Bowlby’s work frames their discussion of what the literature demonstrates about what contributes to a parent meeting a child’s needs for secure attachment and the lifelong relevance of these concepts for healthy child, adolescent, and

adult development. They highlight research showing how parents demonstrate an ability to rise above adverse experiences in their past. Considering attachment in the contexts of one- and two-parent families, adoptive and foster care families, and of children conceived by the new reproductive technologies, they also conclude that a burgeoning literature on non-traditional families firmly supports a diversity model of parenthood. Their take-home message is that the interior emotional and cognitive qualities of parents matter most to effective parenting and to children's adjustment and well-being.

Part VI tackles questions about gender equality, gender difference, and parenthood: Are there gender differences in parenting? Should such difference make a difference to understanding, regulating, and supporting parenthood? Both contributors addressing this question—legal scholar Susan Frelich Appleton and sociologist Andrea Doucet—share a commitment to gender equality and support such policy goals as facilitating women's equal participation in the workplace and men's and women's more equal participation in the home. Both locate themselves within the diversity approach to parenthood. However, there are fruitful and creative tensions between them as to how much a commitment to gender equality requires gender neutrality.

In chapter 11, Appleton makes the case for a legal regime based on the diversity approach to parenthood.<sup>23</sup> This model, she argues, supports recognition of a diverse range of parent-child relationships, without regard to sex or gender. Indeed, she challenges the constitutional validity of parentage laws that would impose an integrative model. She argues that this model and its underlying normative premises rest on gender stereotypes that equal protection jurisprudence and family law have repudiated. She also questions the reliance upon empirical claims about the effect of various familial arrangements on children to support or oppose one model of parenthood over another. Indeed, she argues that empirical data purporting to show that the normative one-mother/one-father configuration serves most children well would not justify enshrining it in parentage rules applicable to all children. Appleton engages with Doucet on the question of whether gender-neutral parental leave policies are up to the task, pointing out the comparatively less family-friendly environment in the United States than in the countries Doucet discusses. In concluding, she calls for a law of parentage rooted in a robust pluralism, a commitment to gender equality, and on common ground between the models on the paramount value of children's interests. She reminds readers that,

whatever approach one takes, parentage rules are important because they invest authority over children in adults.

In chapter 12, Andrea Doucet begins with the points on which she and Appleton agree.<sup>24</sup> She agrees, in general, with Appleton's arguments about the limited role that gender differences should have in law. However, she brings a different set of lenses to the question of gender and parenthood, including sociological, ethnographic, and feminist theoretical work. In contrast to the integrative model, she does not emphasize biological connection. However, she does place critical importance on embodiment to men's and women's experience of parenthood. She contends that arguing for gender neutrality, as a legal principle, does not necessarily translate into an erasure or absence of gender differences in the everyday identities, practices, and responsibilities of parenting. She draws on her ethnographic work with Canadian families to illustrate differences in how fathers and mothers experience the emotional, moral, and community responsibilities of parenting and what factors contribute to those differences. She argues for a shift in focus from measuring gender equality in parenting to making sense of differences. She illustrates her approach by examining whether and how gender differences in parenting should inform parental leave policies.

Part VII considers the implications of global migration of families across national borders for parenthood and family life. As immigration and psychology scholar Carola Suárez-Orozco and immigration and anthropology scholar Marcelo Suárez-Orozco detail in chapter 13, hundreds of millions of families experience and conduct family life across national borders, giving rise to transnational parenting, with reverberations for children, parents, and extended family.<sup>25</sup> They examine what they call "familyhood" through multiple lenses—in its biological, functional, and symbolic complexities. They ask: What does it mean to be a parent, a child, or even a "family unit" in transnational circumstances of global migration? Explaining how immigration is often a *family* project, they point out the gap between the ideal of an integrative family—with parents and children in one household—and the reality of protracted separations between parents and children, with extended kin and fictive kin providing caretaking. They address the complex challenges families face at reunification and offer some guidelines for public policy.

In chapter 14, sociologist Rhacel Salazar Parreñas examines some dynamics of transnational families in the context of the Philippines, one of the largest source countries of migrant workers in contemporary

globalization.<sup>26</sup> She focuses, in particular, on how young adult children of migrant mothers interpret their transnational life. She, too, identifies the challenges that geographic distance poses for transnational families, including marital strain, emotional distance, and the pain of family separation. However, she contends that the dismissal of transnational mothering as a viable means of parenting exacerbates these challenges and constraints. Public opinion in Philippine society, she finds, negatively views transnational mothers because their families depart from an integrative ideal of parenthood, and such views intensify the struggles faced by transnational family members. By contrast, her perspective on such families embraces a diversity model, which assumes that the geographic separation of mothers from their children need not prevent the formation of healthy intergenerational relations between them and rejects the idea that biological mothers are the only or ideal caregivers for their children.

Finally, part VIII poses the “Now what?” question. Given demographic changes in family life, and current patterns of family formation and parenting, what direction should family law and family policy take? Should the proverbial toothpaste go back in the tube, that is, by taking measures to link parenthood more tightly to marriage and discourage the growth in alternative families? Could it? Or should attention shift from family form as such to other matters, like whether persons who become parents are prepared for the responsibilities of parenthood and how law and policy could foster such responsibility? Family researcher and Family Scholars blog director Elizabeth Marquardt and legal scholars June Carbone and Naomi Cahn offer sharply diverging answers to the “Now what?” question.

In chapter 15, Marquardt argues that society can and should seek to renew marriage as a uniquely important integrator of male-female, mother-child, and father-child bonds.<sup>27</sup> She grants that there are many good aspects of recent family change, among them greater professional, educational, and leadership opportunities for women and girls; residential fathers’ increased emotional involvement with their children; reduced tolerance for domestic violence; greater acceptance of diversity within families; and growing acceptance of gay and lesbian persons. However, some recent family changes have been negative and hurt children. She contends that there is much we still do not know, empirically, about same-sex marriage and parenting and child outcomes, and discusses findings from her own study of children conceived with donor sperm. She concludes that society should pursue greater integration, for the sake of children, and that doing so would not undermine the positive aspects of family change.

She challenges Carbone and Cahn's argument (in chapter 16) that a focus on "responsible parenthood" is a better strategy.

In chapter 16, Carbone and Cahn propose to resolve the evident tension between the integrative and diversity models by advancing the "responsible parenthood" model, which would support responsible parenthood irrespective of family form.<sup>28</sup> They elaborate the "critical principles" that support responsible parenthood: emphasize education for men and women; postpone childbearing until adults reach a measure of financial independence and emotional maturity; adopt more flexible attitudes toward gender roles in the home and workplace; and respect the life and reproductive choices of mature and independent persons. They note a central irony in the "family values" debate: in the more liberal, or "blue," states, which have moved toward this responsibility model, there is little preaching of traditional family values, but the two-parent, marital family flourishes. By contrast, families in "red" states, which emphasize steering sexuality and reproduction into marriage, have higher rates of teen births and divorce, and worsening prospects for the next generation. Disagreement over models of parenting, they contend, is less about the ideal—healthy, stable families—and more about the means for achieving that end and how to address the gap between ideal and reality. Wholesale demographic and economic changes, they argue, are shaping family formation and family life and making the "red" model more difficult to sustain.

In our epilogue, we offer some concluding reflections on this book's investigation of critical questions about parenthood and propose directions for further inquiry. Cere addresses several misleading critiques of both integrative and diversity accounts of parenthood to help readers identify lines of attack that obscure the complexity of the issues these accounts raise. McClain observes that the interplay of the contributors' various disciplinary perspectives reveals challenging methodological and normative questions that require consideration in shaping the law of parenthood and family policy. She identifies three issues that illuminate points of agreement and disagreement between the integrative and diversity models and warrant further attention: assessing the fact and value of family diversity and the role of law in addressing that diversity; determining the relevance of natural science and social science to models of parenting and to family law and policy; and addressing the role that public values and the normative commitments of family law and constitutional law should play in fashioning the law of parenthood.



## Notes

1. We use the term *parenthood* rather than *parentage*, which refers typically to the legal determination of who is a parent. We use the broader term *parenthood* to encompass questions of legal definition, as well as other questions about the experience, institution, and regulation of parenthood.

2. In part VI, both authors locate themselves within the diversity model but take different approaches to questions about gender equality, gender difference, and parenthood.

3. See, e.g., The National Organization for Marriage, “Marriage Talking Points,” <http://www.nationformarriage.org> (accessed Jan. 16, 2012).

4. For a helpful explanation of family law’s channelling function, see Carl E. Schneider, “The Channelling Function in Family Law,” *Hofstra Law Review* 20 (1992): 495.

5. We refer here to David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values and a prominent witness for the proponents of California ballot initiative Proposition 8 in the 2010 federal trial over the initiative’s constitutionality. See David Blankenhorn, “How My View on Gay Marriage Changed,” *New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/23/opinion/how-my-view-on-gay-marriage-changed.html?\\_r=2&hp&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/23/opinion/how-my-view-on-gay-marriage-changed.html?_r=2&hp&pagewanted=print) (accessed June 23, 2012); Mark Oppenheimer, “David Blankenhorn and the Battle Over Same-Sex Marriage,” <http://www.yourpublicmedia.org/content/wmpr/david-blankenhorn-and-battle-over-same-sex-marriage> (accessed June 25, 2012).

6. See Linda C. McClain, *The Place of Families: Fostering Capacity, Equality, and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 60–61, 117–154; Susan Frelich Appleton, “Missing in Action? Searching for Gender Talk in the Same-Sex Marriage Debate,” *Stanford Law and Policy Review* 16 (2005): 97, 110.

7. Pew Research Center, *The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families*, Nov. 18, 2010, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families/> (accessed Nov. 15, 2011), 40–41.

8. *Ibid.*, 40.

9. *Ibid.*, 54–56, 62–67. For a subsequent analysis of these different segments, see Pew Research Center, *The Public Renders a Split Verdict on Changes in Family Structure*, Feb. 16, 2011, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/02/16/the-public-renders-a-split-verdict-on-changes-in-family-structure/> (accessed Nov. 15, 2011).

10. See, e.g., *Hernandez v. Robles*, 855 N.E.2d 1 (N.Y. 2006); *Lewis v. Harris*, 875 A.2d 259, 276 (N.J. Super. Ct. App. Div. 2005) (Parrillo, J., concurring) (discussing “conjugal” model of marriage), *affirmed in part and modified in part*, 908 A.2d 196 (N.J. 2006). An oft-discussed dissenting opinion articulating the role of marriage in linking heterosexual sexuality to responsible parenthood (cited favorably in *Hernandez*) is *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, 798 N.E.2d 941, 995 (Mass. 2003) (Cordy, J., dissenting).

11. See, e.g., *Varnum v. Brien*, 763 N.W.2d 862 (Iowa 2009); *Goodridge*, 961–964; *In re Marriage Cases*, 183 P.3d 384 (Cal. 2008). Proposition 8, which amended the California Constitution to define marriage as between one man and one woman, overturned the California Supreme Court’s ruling. A federal district court subsequently held that Prop

8 violated the federal constitution and, after a lengthy trial, made extensive findings about the irrelevance of gender to marriage and parenthood and the equal capacity of heterosexuals and homosexuals to be spouses and parents. *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, 704 F. Supp. 2d 921 (N.D. Cal. 2010), *affirmed sub nom. Perry v. Brown*, 671 F.3d 1052 (9th Cir. 2012).

12. The New York legislature's debate over the recently enacted Marriage Equality Act (2011), opening up civil marriage to same-sex couples, is one example.

13. Daniel Cere, "Toward an Integrative Account of Parenthood" (this volume).

14. Linda C. McClain, "A Diversity Approach to Parenthood in Family Life and Family Law" (this volume).

15. Judith Stacey, "Uncoupling Marriage and Parenting" (this volume).

16. Peter Wood, "The Anthropological Case for the Integrative Model" (this volume).

17. Don Browning, "Legal Parenthood, Natural and Legal Rights, and the Best Interests of the Child: An Integrative View" (this volume).

18. David D. Meyer, "Family Diversity and the Rights of Parenthood" (this volume).

19. Margaret F. Brinig, "A Case for Integrated Parenthood" (this volume).

20. Fiona Tasker, "Developmental Outcomes for Children Raised by Lesbian and Gay Parents" (this volume).

21. Terence E. Hébert, Ellen Moss, Daniel Cere, and Hyun Song, "Biological and Psychological Dimensions of Integrative Attachments" (this volume).

22. Howard Steele and Miriam Steele, "Parenting Matters: An Attachment Perspective" (this volume).

23. Susan Frelich Appleton, "Gender and Parentage: Family Law's Equality Project in Our Empirical Age" (this volume).

24. Andrea Doucet, "Can Parenting Be Equal? Rethinking Equality and Gender Differences in Parenting" (this volume).

25. Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, "Transnationalism of the Heart: Familyhood across Borders" (this volume).

26. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Transnational Mothering and Models of Parenthood: Ideological and Intergenerational Challenges in Filipina Migrant Families" (this volume).

27. Elizabeth Marquardt, "Of Human Bonding: Integrating the Needs and Desires of Women, Men, and the Children Their Unions Produce" (this volume).

28. June Carbone and Naomi Cahn, "The Other Side of the Demographic Revolution: Social Policy and Responsible Parenthood" (this volume).