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BOOK REVIEW

Reconceiving the Second Sex: Men, Masculinity, and Reproduction

R. A. Hadley

Reconceiving the Second Sex: Men, Masculinity, and Reproduction: Inhorn, M. C, Mosegaard, M, Tjornhoj-Thomsen, T, and Goldberg, H. New York, Berghahn Books, 2009, 400 pp., £22.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-84545-473-9

This edited volume of 14 chapters based on empirical studies, for the most part written by anthropologists, argues the case that men's reproductive concerns, contributions and experiences have been marginalised in many fields of study. It is without doubt the most comprehensive book on male reproduction, taking a cross-cultural international perspective drawn from America, Asia, Latin America, and the Far and Middle East. The volume views men as '*reproducers*' and explores issues ranging from childbirth to fatherhood to masculinity and sexuality of 'heterosexuals, homosexuals, married and unmarried men'. The range of the book makes it an ideal resource for undergraduates, graduates, academics, researchers, policy makers and practitioners. In the introduction the editors clearly identify the central tenet of the volume that 'men are viewed as "the second sex" in reproduction. They postulate that the untested assumption that men are disengaged from matters of human reproduction is embedded in policy and in anthropology, feminist, and social science and general media. I would immediately add masculinities to that list.

The book is structured in a user-friendly manner with subjects divided into four parts: Masculinity and Reproduction; Fertility and Family Planning; Infertility and Assisted Reproduction and Childbirth and Fatherhood. Part 1 contains four chapters that examine the contexts, discourses, programs and policies surrounding masculinity and sexuality. The aim is to expose the myths and stereotypes of men's reproductive lives and reconceptualise men as complex reproductive beings. For example, in Chapter One, 'The Missing Gamete? Ten Common Mistakes or Lies about Men's Sexual Destiny' Matthew Gutmann assiduously debunks ten assumptions regularly repeated in academic and popular media, such as 'Men Will Do What They Do Sexually and Reproductively Regardless of Women's Intervention.' Here he highlights the absence in studies of the influence of adult women on adult men. In the following chapter, Lisa Jean Moore explores how masculinity is represented in the discourses surrounding sperm in the reproductive sciences. In Chapter Three, Matthew Dudgeon and Marcia Inhorn take a biosocial view of the biological and cultural anthropological contributions to male reproductive health. The final chapter sees the same two authors discuss child and maternal health initiatives and policies that include men. They highlight examples of the relevance of men in areas such as abortion, childbirth, contraception, fetal harm, and infertility. Having examined masculinity and sexuality from multiple perspectives, this section provides a theoretical baseline for the following sections.

Part 2 consists of three chapters that explore the development of male focussed family planning and the impact of men on women's reproductive health decision-making. In Chapter Five, Laury Oaks, using a feminist lens, holds a very interesting discussion on the discourses encompassing the developments around male hormonal contraceptives. Nguyen Thi Thuy Hanh, in the following chapter, examines Vietnamese men's 'paradoxical position ... of being empowered and powerless' in reproductive health care decisions surrounding abortion. In the final chapter of this section, Aura Yen identifies how, in rural China, culture and

politics intersect with social position and dominant male hierarchy to sometimes negatively affect women's reproductive health. Part 3 consists of three chapters that consider men's experiences and understanding of infertility and explore the importance of biological offspring and, for some, 'social fatherhood'. In Chapter eight, Helene Goldberg interrogates the silence in academic and clinical settings encircling male infertility in Israel and the cultural and symbolic meanings attached to male infertility. In the next chapter, Tine Tjornhoj-Thomsen explores infertile Danish men's experiences, feelings and thoughts about Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) and their reproductive identity in relation to personal and wider contexts. Tjornhoj-Thomsen argues convincingly that 'gender is a difference that makes a difference' in the context of Danish ART's, childlessness and infertility. In the final chapter, Marcia Inhorn examines the reasons behind the popularity of male genital surgery for both fertile and infertile Middle Eastern men. This chapter gives an excellent analysis of the cultural context for the questionable practice for the popular practice of questionable invasive surgical procedures on the testes to improve semen quality. This chapter has significance in the light of a recent campaign in the UK to illegalise male circumcision and stop it being routinely performed on the NHS.

The final section of the book explores men's participation in pregnancy, childbirth, fatherhood and fathering. In Chapter eleven, Tsipy Ivry investigates how Israeli childbirth courses paradoxically lead men to want to participate in the birth process through the medicalisation of pregnancy and childbirth. In the following chapter, Sallie Han, examines how the wider discourse on 'family' and the central social role of 'father' is contextualised in partner pregnancy practices such as 'Belly Talk'. In Chapter Thirteen, Janneli Miller highlights the relationships between social organisation and birthing practices. The indigenous Rarámuri Indian women in Mexico have shifted from solo birthing outdoors to indoors-private husband assisted births. In the final chapter, Maruska la Cour Mosegaard examines the silence surrounding gay fatherhood. Mosegaard subtly navigates between the Danish political and legal landscape and the men's experience of becoming and being a 'dad'. The nuances of 'doing family' as gay fathers are beautifully captured and contextualised.

The chapters in this volume demonstrate the vast variety ways men across the globe intersect with reproduction. If there is a criticism it is the lack of material from the Southern Hemisphere. This may connect to Connell's recent comments about the dominance of the Northern Hemisphere in social and natural sciences. Although strongly influenced by the contributors' different cultural, medical and social anthropological backgrounds, the book is accessible to others from different fields. In the Introduction, the editors highlighted the absence of men's reproductive lives from social science research. In this volume they do much to bring men back in to the reproductive spotlight.

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