

BONNIE FOX

When Couples Become Parents

The Creation of Gender
in the Transition to Parenthood

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS
Toronto Buffalo London

Contents

List of Tables 000

Acknowledgments 000

1 Introduction 000

Diverse Experiences 000

A Study of First-Time Parents 000

The Costs of Privatized Responsibility for Children 000

Studying Motherhood, Fatherhood, and Gender 000

The Book 000

2 Giving Birth: The Dynamics of Support and Agency 000

Giving Birth in the Hospital: Agony, Ecstasy, and Places
in Between 000

Labouring to Give Birth: 'Swimming in a Sea of Pain' 000

Giving Birth under Medical Management: 'I Felt Like I Was
at the Hands of the Doctors' 000

Two More Stories of Childbirth: The Benefits of 'The Epidural God'
and the Help of Others 000

Contextualizing the Challenges of Childbirth: The Importance
of responsibility and Support 000

The Social Relations of Childbirth: 'Everybody Really Helped' 000

A Take-Home Message 000

Wrapping Up 000

3 Becoming Parents: The Challenges of the Postpartum Period 000

Postpartum Problems: 'A Vast Pit of Exhaustion' 000

viii Contents

Contrasting Postpartum Experiences: 'It's Great. Such Joy!' 000
Towards Explaining the Different Experiences: 'A Mother
Needs a Mother' 000
Being a Father: 'It's Not Necessarily Something That Comes
Naturally' 000
Managing Dependency and the Need for Support:
Taking Care of Dad 000
The Support of Others 000
Lessons from the Postpartum Period 000

**4 Becoming Mothers, Making Fathers: Negotiations
in the Economy of Care 000**

Diverse Mothering Practices: From 'Wearing the Baby' to 'Letting
Him Cry a Bit' 000
Mothering as a 'Class Act': The Prerequisites of Intensive
Mothering 000
 The Material Conditions of Intensive Mothering 000
 The Personal Resources behind Intensive Mothering 000
 A Priceless Time? 000
Negotiating Intensive Mothering: The Giving and Receiving
of Care and 'Consent' 000
Intensive Mothering: It Takes Two (or More) 000
Parenting: A Joint Venture 000
The Economy of Care 000
Constructing Fathers, Constructing Mothers 000
Considerations on Intensive Mothering 000

**5 Taking Care of the Baby: Reproducing Gender Differences
and Divisions? 000**

'All of a Sudden, I Was a Woman': Motherhood as Transformation
and a Basis of Gender Divisions 000
'I'm Out Working and She's at Home with the Baby':
The Conventional Couples 000
Reproducing Gendered Divisions, Disrupting Gendered Division 000
Good Dads, Good Husbands: 'Nothing Compares to Just Holding
Your Kids. I Love It.' 000
Parenting Differently 000
Parental Responsibility: 'Fathers Come in Different Flavours ...
But a Mother Is a Mother Is a Mother' 000
Reproducing Gender Inequality? 000

6 Home Making and Making Family 000

The Meaning of Parenthood – and Its Material Requirements:

‘A House and a Baby’ 000

Pressures to Do Housework: ‘Because I’m Home, the Housework
Should Be Taken Care Of’ 000

Home Making and Making Family: ‘It’s a Matter of Having
Family Time’ 000

Contested Terrain ‘There’s Absolutely No Reason Why We
Shouldn’t Be Splitting These Things’ 000

Making Family Together: ‘I’m Just Trying to Share the Load and
Be Fair about It’ 000

Conclusion 000

**7 Being Mothers, Being Fathers: The Costs of Privatized
Responsibility for Children 000**

‘One of the Hardest Transitions I’ve Had to Make Is from Being
a Person Who Is Out in the World to Being Very Enclosed’ 000

‘Motherhood Means a Lot of Worry to Me’ 000

High-Demand, Low-Control, Stressful Work: ‘I Could Just Sit on
the Floor and Cry ... Until I Get My Frustrations Out’ 000

‘My Time Is Not My Own’ 000

Putting the Problems in Context 000

8 A New Life and Changed Relationships 000

Divided Lives, Troubled Relationships 000

No Care, No Gratitude, Lost Love: ‘Baby, Baby, Where Did
Our Love Go?’ 000

Nursing Anger: ‘I Think I’ve Been Really Angry a Lot
of the Time’ 000

Time Famine: ‘We Don’t Spend Much Time Together’ 000

Joint Parenting: ‘I Just Feel Like There’s More Love’ 000

Conclusion 000

9 Conclusion 000

Notes 000

References 000

Index 000