

differently, depending on their race and class. Despite these differences, however, Nemoto argues that the majority of Asian American/white relationships share this commonality: They rely on and practice white middle-class ideals of family and gender norms that deviate little from whiteness as a future model for interracial marriage.

Though the potential is there, *Racing Romance* at times falls short of the goals set out in its introduction, most notably the claim to bridge sociological and psychoanalytic perspectives. As Nemoto explains, sociological models tend to overlook the roles of desire, affection, imagination, and the complexity of emotional patterns in explaining social phenomena and, thus, would benefit from a psychoanalytic approach that takes seriously “racialized desires, ambivalence, or alienation” (p. 7). The insight here is that seemingly private emotions, such as desire, anxiety, and repulsion, are deeply gendered and racialized. This is an important and exciting project: to conceptualize interracial romance not as a private matter between partners but as a social, historical, and transnational affair that exposes multiple and overlapping interrelated forms of power relations. This is where the book does not quite deliver. Although Nemoto emphasizes that interracial romance is constituted by and constitutive of gendered, sexualized, and racialized discourses and practices that circulate between Asia and the United States, this critical stance is not tightly grafted to the respondents’ personal narratives. As it is, the “love stories”—with respondents repeating numerous stereotypes about Asian American women and men and culture—are presented intact and without the benefit of Nemoto’s critical commentaries. This format, which separates the personal narratives almost entirely from the critical analyses that appear in concluding sections, not only gives the book an unfinished feel, but also de-contextualizes and de-historicizes these life stories, making it difficult to grasp the connection between desire, social structure, and power that Nemoto clearly wants us to see.

YEN LE ESPIRITU

University of California, San Diego

When Couples Become Parents: The Creation of Gender in the Transition to Parenthood. By Bonnie Fox. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2009, 334 pp., \$35.00 (paper); \$75.00 (cloth).

DOI: 10.1177/0891243210392222

Does the advent of parenthood necessarily mean that heterosexual couples shift their behavior to privilege the man and disadvantage the woman, thus

creating gender inequity? Does intensive parenting necessarily create more privilege for men and more subordination for women? Despite volumes of research on the household division of labor, work/life integration, and gender inequity more broadly, the power of infants to push gender into more salience persists for many couples. Fox describes the first year of parenthood for 40 Canadian couples. Framed in a social relations perspective with political economy sensibilities, the stories reveal how many—but not all—couples shift towards greater gender inequity.

Fox uses extensive quotes to show both diversity and not-so-simple patterns among the couples she studied. Finding couples through subsidized birth classes, she first gets to know the couples before the birth and in the months afterwards. She describes the material conditions and responses of both partners to the demands of parenthood in gendered contexts.

The chapters loosely follow the first year of the child's life—for example, chapter two is about giving birth; and chapter three is about the postpartum period, emphasizing exhaustion, time strains, and the great value of social support. Gender becomes more of the focus in chapters four through eight—for example, how giving birth makes women mothers, but fathers have more leeway to navigate their role. Gender influences the divisions in the daily care of the infant, the couple, and the home, but there is great variety among couples. Through comparisons, Fox makes clear the socially created expectations and real material demands of infants in chapter six, "Home Making and Making Family." The political economy of privatized care clearly emerges over the months and is the primary focus of chapter seven. Chapter eight continues the illustration of great diversity among couples, with some experiencing turmoil, anger, and frustration; others coming closer in the joint project of caring for the baby; and still others struggling but determining that the partner is not the cause of the challenges.

The interviews showed the limitations of ideological or social constructivist ("doing gender") approaches to explaining the increase in salience of gender among new parents. Contrary to expectations, only sometimes was intensive mothering, breastfeeding, or demands of husbands the cause of disproportionate work for mothers—but all could be factors. Private responsibility for infants is rarely studied in gender analysis, yet it emerges as central for the parents in this study. The rare couples who had help with housework and who had a secure income with reasonable work hours were more likely to have egalitarian parenting.

I liked the stories of couples who grew closer through the joint project of parenting their child, or who could enjoy each other more because friends and family cared for them. Additionally, stories of women who

used bargaining power from higher earnings to elicit more from husbands suggested that gender inequality is not inevitable. Of course, there were plenty of stories of women trying to minimize the impact of the baby on the husband so that he would not lose his position of privilege in the family. Within material limitations, there are stories of creativity, imagination, and agency used to resist gender based inequality.

The stories provide insights on many topics such as couple negotiations, work/family interfaces, the challenges of lower-wage jobs, breastfeeding, and power dynamics. This plethora of insights makes the book useful for many topics, but hard to summarize. True to the data, Fox did not force couples into neat categories if they did not fit, but the complexity makes useful conclusions challenging.

This book shows the value of deep knowledge of a specific group, as well as the need for models of couple equity/inequality following childbirth to include measures of social support and social context, in addition to standard measures such as education, wages, and work hours. For teaching, this book is accessible for advanced undergraduate students and sophisticated enough for graduate seminars in gender, family, and social inequality. The story of Rosa and Ross would work well in a reader for undergraduate students.

Fox's work contributes to other studies that show women's employment, gender egalitarian ideology, and father's interest are not enough to undo gender. The uneasy answers suggested by Fox's couples involve material and social support for new parents, encouraging new parents to make parenthood a joint project, and jobs that allow for a living wage and time with family—factors beyond the control of most couples.

JULIA McQUILLAN
University of Nebraska

Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman. By Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009, 194 pp., \$64.50 (cloth); \$23.95 (paper).

DOI: 10.1177/0891243210394172

Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant chronicles the experiences of Black women from various walks of life as they confront the hidden injuries of race- and gender-based oppression. The author challenges the reader to deconstruct the myth of the strong Black woman by considering how Black women hide their pain and anger. Beauboeuf-Lafontant discusses how the