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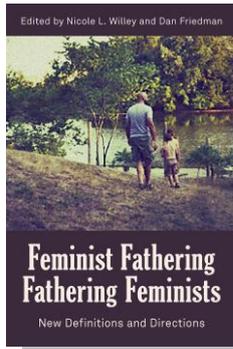
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Feminist Fathering/Fathering Feminists
New Definitions and Directions

Edited by Nicole L. Willey and Dan Friedman

Feminist Fathering/Fathering Feminists is a collection that interrogates several things at once. First, we have had to struggle with basic definitions. What is fathering practice, and who can be a father? Fathering in all its guises is in the process of transformation, as fathers are both more involved with their families than before, but also still largely considered inferior to mothers in most ways. And who is a father?

At first glance this seems simple, but of course it is not. Transgender fathers, lesbian fathers, non-cisnet fathers, nonbiological fathers, and fathers who fulfill the role without legally adopting their children are all at play in real families today. The expansion of fathers as involved, nurturing parents can benefit families as a whole as well as the individuals in the family, and could help lead us out of the gender role inequality our society has not been able to overcome. The realization that fathers can, do, and should provide carework in their families and with their children, will help free everyone from forced gender roles and the reproduction of traditional gender roles. However, while active fathering should help mothers ultimately have less of the burden of parenting, and while it most certainly helps children and fathers themselves, it does run the risk of reifying carework as feminized and private.

If the work of parenting is solely the individual's responsibility, then it will always be undervalued instead of being given appropriate societal supports for the important work that it is. For this reason, feminist theory must be a part of the formula for fathers and fathering practice that breaks out of patriarchal modes. While the feminisms being utilized and discussed by our contributors are not monolithic, we have given preference to intersectional feminism as a way to untangle and enlighten our analysis of fathers. In this collection we are committed to uncovering, analyzing, and transforming oppressions where we find them; we are also interested in the ways in which feminists, and feminist fathers in particular, commit to undoing the Patriarchy in not only their own homes, but in our shared communities and world. This is a tough job for all parents, and one in which, as will be explored, perfection is not possible. But in our imperfect ways, we, and the fathers we are, study, and emulate, are working toward gender equality in and through parenting practice.

Each contributor, through either personal explorations or popular culture/literary examinations of fathers, is looking to define feminist fathering while showing us examples of fathers who meet, exceed, or fall short of their hopes and expectations. Several themes have emerged in the book, and one of those themes is the possibility found in transgression. If we look outside of the mainstream, to people bucking the status quo, we will often have a better chance of finding models of feminist fathering that should be held up and emulated. Examining these examples of single fathers, queer fathers, people of color, and people in the process of defining, redefining, and questioning assumptions about fathering in their lives are people who will help us to understand the possibilities for feminist fathering.

Nicole Willey is Professor of English at Kent State University Tuscarawas, where she teaches literatures and writing and serves as the Faculty Mentoring Program Coordinator for her campus. She authored *Creating a New Ideal of Masculinity for American Men: The Achievement of Sentimental Women Writers in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, and co-edited the collection *Motherhood Memoirs: Mothers Creating/Writing Lives*. **Dan Friedman** studied music at York University, and got interested in feminism while learning about cultural theory from Ioan Davies in grad school.

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"This is the collection feminism needs. This collection demonstrates how important fathers are in the lives of the children, including how fathers have shaped their children's feminism and thoughts on gender. Fathers, like mothers, can work toward dismantling patriarchy through the way they father/parent and this collection explores that so perfectly. This collection makes a significant impact on the study of fatherhood and motherhood and opens to the door to continue exploring this important topic." - **Heather Jackson**, MA, MPH – Mental health counselor, birth doula, freelance writer and editor (Rhode Island, USA)

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