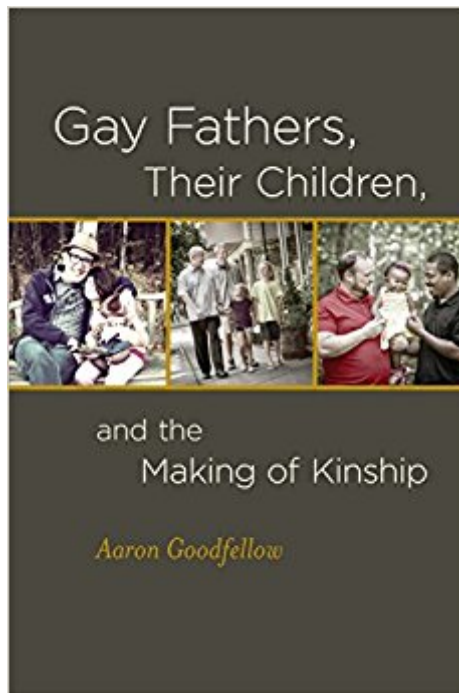




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Gay Fathers, Their Children, And The Making Of Kinship



Synopsis

While the topic of gay marriage and families continues to be popular in the media, few scholarly works focus on gay men with children. Based on ten years of fieldwork among gay families living in the rural, suburban, and urban area of the eastern United States, *Gay Fathers, Their Children, and the Making of Kinship* presents a beautifully written and meticulously argued ethnography of gay men and the families they have formed. In a culture that places a premium on biology as the founding event of paternity, Aaron Goodfellow poses the question: Can the signing of legal contracts and the public performances of care replace biological birth as the singular event marking the creation of fathers? Beginning with a comprehensive review of the relevant literature in this field, four chapters—each presenting a particular picture of paternity—explore a range of issues, such as interracial adoption, surrogacy, the importance of physical resemblance in familial relationships, single parenthood, delinquency, and the ways in which the state may come to define the norms of health. The author deftly illustrates how fatherhood for gay men draws on established biological, theological, and legal images of the family often thought oppressive to the emergence of queer forms of social life. Chosen with care and described with great sensitivity, each carefully researched case examines gay fatherhood through life narratives. Painstakingly theorized, *Gay Fathers, Their Children, and the Making of Kinship* contends that gay families are one of the most important areas to which social scientists might turn in order to understand how law, popular culture, and biology are simultaneously made manifest and interrogated in everyday life. By focusing specifically on gay fathers, Goodfellow produces an anthropological account of how paternity, sexuality, and masculinity are leveraged in relations of care between gay fathers and their children.

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"Queer kinship is far from 'virtually normal': it remains uncanny. Aaron Goodfellow's in-depth study of gay fathers gives voices and faces to these precarious families. Individual stories illustrate how these men painfully strive to embody norms that leave them at the threshold of family life." (Eric Fassin professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, Paris-8 University) "Gay Fathers, their Children, and the Making of Kinship is a profound contemplation on the forms of queer sociality in contemporary North America. The portraits of gay fathers and their children lead us, slowly but steadily, into an understanding of how gay men open themselves to an education into what it is to be related and thereby give expression to the uncanny in kinship. What does it take for some who stand in a diagonal relation to law to heal the wounds that are inflicted by law on their forms of intimacy? And how does a son learn to recognize his own father as gay in this scene of instruction where he foregoes the comfort of a ready made appeal to identity politics and instead embraces the indeterminate space of relearning what he already sensed? Is this, perhaps, a description of ethnography as a way of unlearning the concepts we had become too comfortable with? A brilliant book that gets its power from the profoundly understated theoretical claims which nevertheless take your breath away." (Veena Das Johns Hopkins University) "Gay Fathers, Their Children, and the Making of Kinship is beautifully written, meticulously argued, and painstakingly theorized. Goodfellow demonstrates a mastery of a wide range of theoretical literature, bringing anthropology into conversation with philosophy and invigorating very longstanding debates in anthropology with new insight. This is the most innovative book on kinship since Schneider's American Kinship." (Sameena Mulla Marquette University)

An important contribution to the anthropology of gay kinship, ten years in the making.

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