'Family' is a contested terrain with moral or political undertones, whether in reports of family decline in the mass media or in visual images of 'the family', which idealize a harmonious middle-class family of two parents and their children. Whatever image is offered as normal may provide a sense of belonging to those who fit it and leave those whose family is outside the parameters feeling marginalized. So individuals may provide or withhold information in order to match external expectations. The authors have not neglected the existence of hidden or private aspects of family. They have mentioned, and chosen not to explore, the family as the setting for abuse and dark secrets.

The meaning of 'family', particularly in a multi-cultural, pluralistic society, involves social, as well as biological, bonds and individuals are aware of who is in and who is not. Yet in the same conversation, an individual may use 'family' in two contexts, the inner core and the broader family. The authors conclude 'that the meanings of family, while never fixed and stable, are not completely arbitary' (277).

Taking Care: Lessons from Mothers with Disabilities

M. Grimley-Mason and L. Long-Bellil.
Lanham: University Press of America Inc., 2012.

REVIEWED BY MARÍA VELÁSQUEZ-MULINO AND LUCY E. BAILEY

This encouraging text introduces the reader to qualitative data from twenty-six mothers with disabilities whose lives challenge enduring views of "disability" and "motherhood" as incompatible. Despite negative social discourse regarding disability, the mothers the text represents confront society, their families and their self-perceptions with courage and self-determination. The stories portray mothers as challenging and negotiating social expectations of "good mothers" as "perfect" and "natural care giver[s]" (xi). Mason, a professor emerita of English at Emmanuel College and Long-Bellil, an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts, focus on women's experiences and resilience, closing each chapter with general "lessons to share" for other disabled mothers, counselors and health professionals.

The book is structured into six chapters. The first four chapters explore issues women face in each stage of the "mothering cycle" (xi) while Chapter Six considers key policy issues. Throughout, the authors highlight several common themes, including the dualism mothers with disabilities experience from being, at times, both "caregivers" and "care receivers," and the crucial "interdependence with family, friends and other forms of support" (p.xv) that aids their mothering. Chapter One focuses on reproduction decision making, pregnancy and child birth, while Chapter Two attends to issues arising during infancy and pre-school years. The third chapter, "Meeting the Outside World," explores how disabled mothers negotiate their children's relationships with the "outside world" as they move in other spaces to become aware of and understand the able world. Chapter Four focuses on family relations and community, exploring how mothers create environments for their teenage and young adult children that foster willingness to assist with and understand others' needs. Chapter Five presents a summary of major findings, and in the final chapter, Linda Long-Bellil explains how policies may overlook the needs of women with disabilities or contribute to support them and their families.

Inevitably, no study can represent the full spectrum of women's experiences of mothering with a disability, including those whose struggles overshadowed their successes. Yet, from the perspective of the first reviewer, a mother with a disability, this interpretivist (Crotty) text offers an affirming corrective to the absences in existing accounts regarding the creativity, resilience, and resourcefulness of mothers with disabilities. The authors touch on key intersections among class, ethnicity, and disability shaping mothering. In this regard, the textual focus primarily on mothers' struggles and successes in becoming "good mothers" during the stages of motherhood enriches existing accounts. Also, the text is a potential learning tool for other mothers in detailing how mothers with disabilities navigate varied complexities uncommon to those who are able-bodied. For readers interested in qualitative methodologies, the brief attention to research particulars may leave unanswered questions regarding which scholarly allegiances and feminist methodologies guided their approach.

The book is recommended for mothers with disabilities and their families, social workers, health care professionals, and policy makers developing alternatives to address the needs of this marginalized group of women. Teachers, too, would benefit from the text given their important role in reconceptualizing and expanding perceptions of dis/ability and helping disabled individuals to be recognized as capable and complete human beings.

References

Crotty, M. *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process.* London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1998.