



BOOK REVIEWS

Review editor: Francisco Muñoz-Pérez
Assisted by Dominique Diguët of the INED Documentation Department

GENDER: HISTORY, INEQUALITIES (2)

Special topic coordinators: Marion Maudet, Gaëlle Meslay, Alice Olivier, Anne Paillet
“Demography, Gender and Societies” Unit

- L. HOLTEN** *Mothers, Medicine and Morality in Rural Mali. An Ethnographic Study of Therapy Management of Pregnancy and Children’s Illness Episodes*
• Reviewed by Véronique Hertrich 702
- M.-L. DÉROFF,
T. FILLAUT (eds.)** *Boire : une affaire de sexe et d’âge [Drinking: a matter of sex and age]*
• Reviewed by Michel Bozon 706
- H. LEVEY FRIEDMAN** *Playing to Win: Raising Children in a Competitive Culture*
• Reviewed by Julien Bertrand 709
- ASSOCIATION NATIONALE
DES ÉTUDES FÉMINISTES
(ANEF)** *Le genre dans l’enseignement supérieur et la recherche. Livre blanc [A white paper on gender in higher education and research]*
- M. DELVAUX, V. LEBRUN,
L. PELLETIER (eds.)** *Sexe, amour et pouvoir. Il était une fois... à l’université [Sex, love and power: once upon a time... at university]*
• Reviewed by Mathieu Trachman 712
- C. DEBEST** *Le choix d’une vie sans enfant [Choosing childlessness]*
Reviewed by Gaëlle Meslay 715
- I. THÉRY** *Mariage et filiation pour tous. Une métamorphose inachevée [Marriage and filiation for all: an incomplete metamorphosis]*
• Reviewed by Gaëlle Meslay 718

OTHER BOOKS

- J. WOOD** *Essays on Socio-Economic Differentiation in European Fertility. The Impact of Economic Context and Social Policy*
• Reviewed by Angela Greulich 720
- L. NOWIK,
B. LECESTRE-
ROLLIER (eds.)** *Viellir dans les pays du Sud. Les solidarités familiales à l’épreuve du vieillissement [Ageing in Southern countries: can family solidarity meet the needs of older adults?]*
• Reviewed by Tom Briaud 725
- G. BOËTSCH, L. GUEYE,
E. MACIA, Y. JAFFRÉ,
P. BOURDELAIS (eds.)** *Santé et sociétés en Afrique de l’Ouest [Health and societies in West Africa]*
• Reviewed by Clémence Schantz 728

HOLTEN Lianne, 2013, *Mothers, Medicine and Morality in Rural Mali: An Ethnographic Study of Therapy Management of Pregnancy and Children's Illness Episodes*, Zürich, LIT Verlag, XI-237 p.

In matters of health and of development generally, infrastructures and awareness campaigns are expected to be factors of progress that improve the situation of local populations. Yet on the ground we sometimes observe considerable discrepancies between the programmes that are set up and how target populations use them; examples are underuse of available services and non-consultation for what may be serious medical problems. When problems are clearly not due to service organization factors (cost, quality), we readily turn for explanations to “cultural” criteria (values, representations, etc.), understood to prevent people from accepting “Western” health care practices. Lianne Holten’s book on the health-seeking behaviour of women in a village in Mali takes this analysis much further, showing that use (or non-use) of available biomedical services, while partially conditioned by local representations of illness, is also closely related to how decision-making power is distributed, especially by sex and generation. With meticulous precision, the author demonstrates throughout the book the social and family mechanics that determine women’s practices and choices while likewise limiting their maneuvering room and constraining their choices and practices by way of heavy moral requirements.

The book, derived from Holten’s thesis in anthropology, is based on her monographic study of practices in a small village in southwest Mali upon the opening of a new maternity clinic (funded by private NGOs). Given Holten’s credentials not only as an anthropologist but also a midwife – she worked several years in that profession in the Netherlands – she is particularly qualified to examine interactions between biomedicine and local therapeutic practices. She began her fieldwork (a total of eight months from 2007 to 2012) with the twofold intention of developing the activity of the new maternity clinic and studying local representations of illness and “therapy management”. Initially she considered these two objectives integral parts of an action research project: to provide access to modern medical care in a remote, isolated village where living conditions are extremely precarious, and to do so by taking into account local knowledge, as this would make it easier – so she assumed – to promote modern health care, in particular by combating what appeared to be mothers’ passivity when their children fell ill. In the course of her research the author gradually changed her viewpoint, shifting from a medical approach to illness centred on individual and biological health determinants to an approach in terms of local women’s healthcare seeking behaviour that took into account not only the various therapeutic options available but also the social system, with its inequalities, power relations, and the maneuvering room available to individuals as determined by their respective places in that system.

To understand what is involved for these women in seeking care for themselves or sick children, the author adopted an anthropology-of-moralities approach. At the core of the society and Holten's study of it is the notion of "shame", *maloya* in the local language. Any researcher who has worked in West Africa knows how important *maloya* is: it is omnipresent in interviews touching on such questions as the soundness of an individual action, expression of a personal viewpoint, and how to behave toward elders. The French translation, *honte*, fails to fully capture the meaning, as *maloya* encompasses more than negative connotations such as humiliation or dishonour; in fact, the word refers at a more general level to the idea of reserve, modesty, discernment, and ensuring that one's behaviour accords well with one's status within the social system. To "have shame" is to know how to situate oneself in relation to others and to adopt the appropriate behaviour, which varies by one's position in relation to one's interlocutor. It also means being attentive to others and taking care not to express an opinion or make a request that might put one's interlocutor in an awkward position. The notion plays a key role in the construction of social relations, particularly between the sexes and generations. It expresses orders of precedence and who is at liberty to do what; it lays down inequalities and the distances people are expected to keep from each other (notably, distance between husband and wife); it stages those inequalities and separations by showing what happens to someone who does not comply with them (sanctions range from mockery to outright social rejection). But as the author shows, this moral system is also a means for developing a place for oneself and increasing one's social capital: it is in meeting these moral expectations that women manage to forge a reputation for themselves, a status in the community, and a relational network they can depend upon. And the moral system is not merely coercive; women themselves can appropriate it, use it as a resource, to acquire leverage or to secure or bolster their place and that of their family in the local social world. Complying with the complex local morality code proves that one has acquired the skills needed to understand and benefit from the social game. In the end, rather than signifying passivity, it manifests a particular type of rationality, investment, and, the author stresses, genuine agency.

In her investigation of the notion of shame, Holten reveals the extremely complex relations and socially regulated decision-making that precede any move to seek therapy, any possible medical consultation, even when health care is immediately accessible and affordable. For a mother to bring her child to the clinic, it first has to be in her socially appointed power to do so, which is not usually the case. By comparing different family actors' accounts of the same illness episodes, the author brings to light different perceptions, the different symptoms different members identify or the different ways they identify them, and the fact that there are rules about who can state a diagnosis and seek health care. Young mothers (and young fathers) cannot imagine being at liberty to say what they think about their child's health condition or deciding what to do about it. It is the elders' prerogative to interpret symptoms, pronounce

on how serious the situation is, choose a therapeutic option in a context offering several types of medical care, mobilize the means and determine the logistics for treating (or not treating) the child. So there is manifest incongruity between the bioethical bases of health care programmes where patients' individual responsibility is involved and local realities, where illness and therapy management is collective. Whereas mothers are the main target of health policies for children, back in the village those same mothers often remain in the background when it comes to making health care decisions for themselves and their children.

Another cause of health programme dysfunction concerns possible divergences between biomedical and local interpretations of illness. The book offers an eloquent demonstration of this in connection with malnutrition. In biomedical understanding, malnutrition is caused by nutritional deficiencies (the child is not eating enough or not eating the right foods) and requires a nutritional response (supplementing or adapting the child's diet). International programmes for combating malnutrition are active first and foremost on food-related fronts (food security, consumption practices, representations, etc.). In local knowledge, however, malnutrition symptoms do not pertain to nutrition. In biomedical terms, they are due to premature weaning, in turn due to closely spaced births. In local knowledge terms, a pregnant woman's "hot belly" is considered a threat to the health of her still nursing child, so that child is weaned early, taken away from the mother as soon as the family discovers the new pregnancy. Under these circumstances, treatment and prevention become difficult, first because the pregnant mother's heat rather than nutritional deficiency is understood to be the cause of the child's illness; second, because closely spaced pregnancies (ascribed to excessive sexuality) are socially disapproved and concealed as long as possible, including by medical professionals. Last, a sick child is seldom given a specific nutritional treatment because the understanding is that children will naturally eat when they are hungry (and should not be forced to eat) and because it would not be appropriate to treat one child differently from the others. Despite the author's personal investment in the matter, she discovers that the measures she has taken to inform and educate the population on the causes and treatment of malnutrition have little impact with them. The extremely limited success of national and international campaigns against malnutrition is surely to be put down to the gap between biomedical and local understandings of malnutrition, and the reality of early child weaning. To be effective, the author argues, a health programme has to find some measure of common ground between its own interpretative system and the local one. For example, the women responded favourably to moves to make contraception available because it meets their need to space births.

This book will interest and engage researchers and policymakers alike. Anyone who has done fieldwork in Mali or elsewhere in West Africa will find in it several of the situations and paradoxes they were confronted with; the

author's formalization and keys for interpreting them are particularly stimulating here. One of the book's strengths is to remain fully anchored in reality: Holten applies complex theoretical notions and frameworks (anthropology of moralities, internalization of norms and inequalities) but always to account for and better understand her own richly detailed empirical materials. Her interviews bring to light these women's own reflexivity about their lives, actions, the constraints they are under. We are always on the side of the actors, of their rationality in coping not only with difficult socioeconomic conditions but also particularly constrictive social regulations and frameworks. The author likewise takes poverty and vulnerability thoroughly into account. As she sees it, these are what condition women's submissive acceptance of their society's moral injunctions: poverty and vulnerability deprive those women of alternatives for attaining material and psychological security. This thesis, highlighted throughout the work – and to which we can readily subscribe – is nonetheless rather general and not really validated empirically here. Depending on their area of specialization, some readers are likely not to feel entirely satisfied. There is little in the way of demographic statistics and those presented are rudimentary. However, Holten's questions and findings as an anthropologist will be useful in demographic investigations of health questions, both her methodology (for example, selected statements from verbal autopsies) and analysis grids (healthcare itineraries, pluralism and comparison of therapeutic systems, family actors, etc.). While the book centres on health issues, it also discusses several other problem areas in gender relations, including the construction of distance between spouses, domestic violence, social oversight of private relations, and ideas about the body. The book is relatively short (237 p.), stimulating, sensitive, precise and extremely well written – an excellent source of inspiration for thinking on gender and health in West Africa.

Véronique HERTRICH

DÉROFF Marie-Laure, FILLAUT Thierry (eds.), 2015, *Boire: une affaire de sexe et d'âge* [Drinking: a matter of sex and age], Rennes, Presses de l'EHESP, 208 p.

Edited by the sociologist Marie-Laure Déroff and the historian Thierry Fillaut and published by the École des Hautes Études de Santé Publique, France's most important school of public health, *Boire: une affaire de sexe et d'âge* comprises twelve chapters by 21 authors from a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, history, anthropology, public health, as well as psychiatry, education science, science and techniques of sports and physical activities, and even anthropology of marketing and British civilization. Most are from universities in Brittany or western France, and the examples analysed are often from that region, though there is no explicit mention that this is the book's geographical focus.

All chapters analyse how gender and age differentiate alcohol-related practices and representations. Gender is seen as a principle of bi-categorization that generates masculine and feminine rather than a decisive factor in social and power relations. Age here refers primarily to youth, though one chapter focuses on old age. Alcohol-related practices are not at all viewed in terms of sociology of consumption, an approach that would have led to discussing fine group distinctions in behaviour and practices (in line with Bourdieu's *Distinction*), but rather of the socially "problematic" aspects of alcohol use, identified as addiction or deviance. According to the blurb, the aim is to "understand and prevent the health and social damage caused by excessive drinking". Paradoxically, non-drinker abstinence is seen as a kind of deviance among men, a corollary of the fact that there is something normal about adult male alcohol consumption, even if excessive, contrary to female consumption.

Alcoholism, excessive drinking and drunkenness are therefore more often the focus here than drinking at ordinary levels. The emergence of alcoholism as a "social problem" and the evolution of that problem over time are presented first from a historical perspective. In the nineteenth century, the problem and source of scandal were public drunkenness and "notorious" alcoholism (a matter of "public knowledge"). In the twentieth, alcoholism came to be seen as an illness that typically affects working-class men. Since alcohol consumption was a male attribute, female alcoholism paradoxically became both invisible and overly visible: in principle it was not supposed to exist, since women were temperate "by nature"; they tended to be seen as victims of their intimate partner's alcoholism or guardians of household morality. When women started drinking, the effects were believed more devastating since women were supposedly more fragile. Women's alcoholism elicited particularly strong social discomfort because it seriously disrupted the hierarchical order of the sexes and women's social identity (causing them to forget their maternal duty), whereas excessive drinking did not adversely affect the image of the virile male, as sociologist Monique Membrado points out.

Inserted between book chapters are medical texts on alcoholism (under the heading “reverse angle”), interview excerpts (“verbatim”) and useful statistical tables (“supporting figures”) that unfortunately are not really discussed. Indicators of ordinary consumption, frequency of excessive drinking episodes, and experiences of drunkenness are crossed with sex, age bracket and time period for a range of countries, from which it appears that young people of both sexes are frequently drunk though they only drink occasionally and that, conversely, older men and women drink much more often but seldom get drunk. Comparisons of male and female high school students in various European countries show that this age group drinks more in Northern Europe (Denmark, United Kingdom, Ireland) than elsewhere and that levels for young men and women are similar and actually higher for women in some countries (United Kingdom, Ireland). In Italy, on the other hand, the alcohol consumption levels of adolescent girls are much lower than those of their male counterparts. The figures seem to indicate that there is no precise alcoholism indicator; alcoholism remains a medical category that does not readily lend itself to statistical objectification.

The episodes of binge drinking among young people regularly highlighted by the media, political and policy actors, and public health professionals are a source of another, historically more recent, social concern. The authors show that it is often public, collective drunkenness – a form of sociability and potential source of public disorder – that is most worrying, whereas young people’s private drinking, partially invisible, elicits less concern. Social actors analyse the question in terms of addiction, a somewhat ill adapted term since, as we have seen, young people’s alcohol consumption tends to be occasional.

One chapter, written from a gender studies perspective, analyses the emergence in France of wine advertisements that target women. As women’s consumption is still well below men’s, the economic actors in the wine sector are trying to increase it. To do so they have devised a discourse that draws on representations of women’s supposed taste for the sweet and fruity, for white and rosé wines, their attention to bottle aesthetics – all of which, explains the author, reflects gender stereotypes in operation. Essentializing women’s preferences in connection with wine amounts to hierarchically ordering men and women in accordance with the strong/weak dichotomy and turning women into specific consumers as opposed to the universal male consumer. This is a return to the “differential valence of the sexes” analysed by Françoise Héritier.

Another chapter focuses entirely on Ireland, an interesting case because it is one of the few European countries where alcohol consumption has risen in recent years and where women’s consumption has pulled ahead of men’s. The interpretation offered here in terms of that country’s identity – globalization and immigration have led Irish women to drink as a way of manifesting their Irishness – is perplexing: isn’t it somewhat tautological? Rising alcohol consumption rates, particularly those of women, probably indicate changes in

relations between the sexes and sociability that would have to be analysed in finer detail.

The book contains several interesting studies. Despite the reference to gender in the subtitle, however, the view of gender as a hierarchical ordering of male and female is not present throughout. It is regrettable that the afterword speaks only of prevention, making no further mention of gender or age.

Michel BOZON

LEVEY FRIEDMAN Hilary, 2013, *Playing to Win: Raising Children in a Competitive Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press, XVI-288 p.

Many studies bring to light the importance of enjoying competition and the hierarchical relations associated with it in definitions of masculinity. The “spirit of competition” is used to interpret gender differences in such varied areas as academic study orientations, professional careers, and leisure activities. This agonistic penchant has been shown to be a central feature of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 2015)⁽¹⁾ as well as a source of masculine domination (Bourdieu, 1998)⁽²⁾ and its associated costs (Dulong et al., 2012)⁽³⁾. It is from this perspective that we can best apprehend Hilary Levey Friedman’s study as it relates to gender studies. By focusing on children’s involvement in competitive after-school activities (defined as “organized activities run by adults where records are kept and prizes given out”, p. 8), she shows us how young girls can be initiated early into various forms of competition. More specifically, while the central research concern in this book is the reproduction of academic inequalities, it offers precious insight into the conditions under which girls engage in these activities and how they appropriate the spirit of competition they are led to develop there.

The book is based on a study of children aged six to twelve and their parents living in a major conurbation in the northeast United States. Through interviews and observation of an almost exclusively middle-class population, the author studies the wellsprings of involvement in three competitive activities: chess, soccer and dance. For each of her case study activities she observed ordinary practitioners in one urban and one suburban field site. The study is based on 16 months of observation and 172 interviews with families, including children themselves and activity instructors. The cross-tabulated data are quite dense, though it is regrettable that so little from the interviews with children was cited in the analysis (especially in the last chapter, concentrated on their perspective). Most of the book is about what motivates parents to enrol their children in these activities, rather than on their socializing effects. The three activities attract quite different practitioners: most chess-club participants are boys; dance studios attract almost exclusively girls, most from lower middle-class families, while soccer clubs are more mixed and attract the highest proportion of children from highly educated, high-income middle-class backgrounds.

The first chapter, “Outside class: a history of American children’s competitive activities”, recounts a socio-historical process that affected all three activities:

(1) Connell R.W., Messerschmidt J.W., “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept”, *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6, December 2005, pp. 829-859. Published in French under the title, “Faut-il repenser le concept de masculinité hégémonique ?”, *Terrains et Travaux*, 27, 2015, pp. 151-192.

(2) Bourdieu P., *La domination masculine*, 1998, Paris, Le Seuil, 134 p. Published in English as *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001.

(3) Dulong D., Guionnet C., Neveu E., eds., 2012, *Boys don't cry! Les coûts de la domination masculine*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 334 p.

the intensification and generalization of competitions and contests. According to the author, this historical movement led to an “explosion of hypercompetitiveness” starting in the 1980s; she cites a series of indicators of the process: a remarkable increase in participant numbers (to 3 million children in soccer, 400,000 in chess); the development of new types of competitions due to the multiplication of youth leagues and age categories; ever-earlier rankings; and coach or instructor professionalization. With these points in mind we can understand how it is that greater numbers of girls have come to participate in competitive activities: a wider offer of strongly competitive practices, including in activities like dance that did not use to fall into that category.

But the inflation of competition should be related to the social groups that appropriate it. Drawing directly on a study by Annette Lareau (2011)⁽⁴⁾, Friedman explains that the rise in children’s involvement in competitive activities reflects their middle-class parents’ understanding of childhood, wherein considerable emphasis is placed on supervised activities designed to develop their skills.⁽⁵⁾ Friedman shows that parents who support their children’s investment in competitive activities expect this to help them develop skills that will facilitate academic and professional success, regardless of sex. She identifies five types of skills in these parents’ accounts: “internalizing the importance of winning”, “bouncing back from a loss to win in the future”, “learning how to work well under time pressure”, “learning how to perform in stressful situations”, and “being able to perform under the gaze of others”. Together, these traits constitute what she calls “competitive kid capital”, a resource that parents are intent on developing in their children so they can succeed in the American educational system, which is particularly attentive to extracurricular activities in its selection processes, notably for admission to prestigious universities.

This development, while encouraging girls to engage in competitive activities, does not efface gender differences when it comes to areas of investment. In this connection the author notes that gender-based oppositions were strongest and most rigid in the children’s narratives. Participation in the different case study activities reveals differences within the American middle class. Dance remains a highly female activity, one that foregrounds traditional femininity by emphasizing physical appearance; it fits the expectations of parents at the bottom of the middle-class hierarchy. While the multiplication of dance contests means that competition in dance is now quite developed, that competition is shaped by the importance attributed to gender conformity. Competition in dance concentrates on the aesthetic dimension of the activity, and priority is given to support and assistance behaviour. In this respect, soccer is its diametric

(4) Lareau A., 2011, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 480 p.

(5) Lareau contrasts this view of childhood to the understanding prevalent among the working class, much more concerned about “the accomplishment of [the child’s] natural growth” than activities for organizing children’s free time.

opposite: positive emphasis is on aggressive, self-assertive femininity. Parents who have their daughters play soccer expect it to develop their self-assurance and confidence, qualities they consider favourable to obtaining jobs that involve a high level of responsibility. These children belong to the upper middle class, and are sometimes quite harshly critical of activities like dance, deemed appropriate for “girly girls”, a term that delegitimizes the version of femininity favoured by families with less economic, social and cultural capital. Chess, meanwhile, is described as a hybrid case: girls who play it are called “pink warrior girls”, a term that suggests a kind of aggressiveness that can nonetheless be reconciled with feminine bodily norms.

While Friedman’s research focus was middle-class parents’ intense investment in child rearing, she also sheds light on the gendered aspect of their child rearing practices, showing how gendered models vary *within* the middle classes. More attentive observation of distinctions between the different types of capital might have shed still more, or different, light on those internal differences.

Julien BERTRAND

ASSOCIATION NATIONALE DES ÉTUDES FÉMINISTES (ANEF), 2014, *Le genre dans l'enseignement supérieur et la recherche. Livre blanc* [A white paper on gender in higher education and research], Paris, La Dispute, *Le genre du monde*, 225 p.

and

DELVAUX Martine, LEBRUN Valérie, PELLETIER Laurence (eds.), 2015, *Sexe, amour et pouvoir. Il était une fois... à l'université* [Sex, love and power: once upon a time ... at university], Montréal, Remue-ménage, 148 p.

There are few studies on sexual violence in academia. Two recent works present the current situation in France and Quebec and suggest further research avenues. The French national association of feminist studies (ANEF) “white paper” focuses generally on how universities take gender into account and the professional inequalities operative there. One chapter assesses recent confrontations and progress in the area of sexual harassment, bringing to light some of the specificities of this type of violence. *Sexe, amour et pouvoir*, meanwhile, is a collection of analyses and personal accounts by female students and professors that discuss the seduction-based relationships that can develop in these institutions. The book raises the issue of violence but also the question of relations between conjugality, sexuality and teaching in a context of gender asymmetry.

ANEF stresses the diversity of situations – from psychological pressure to rape – covered by the notion of sexual harassment and sexist violence. Status differences imply differences in power and prestige. Contexts too differ: classes, administrations, research projects. But in all these situations in France, perpetrators enjoy relative impunity and there is very little in the way of victim protection, despite the development of advocacy groups (e.g., CLASCHES, or Collectif de Lutte Anti-Sexiste Contre le Harcèlement Sexuel dans l'Enseignement Supérieur) and new arrangements for treating the problem. An exception is the Cellule de Veille et d'Information sur le Harcèlement Sexuel or CEVIHS [sexual harassment watch and information group] at the University of Lille 3, active since 2011. It assists victims and provides information to institution employees. Two recent trials did attain the status of public controversy, but as they did not result in any convictions; what they illustrate above all is the difficulty of handling this question institutionally or in the courts. The questions that get raised during these public controversies are another clue: “How can educated individuals, esteemed by their peers and in some cases renowned beyond their immediate scientific community, devoted to intellectual activities and whose task is to respect and transmit the values of the French Republic, give themselves over to such improper behaviour? And how can women in higher education, who are supposed to know their rights and to possess resources, let this kind of thing happen to them?” (p. 160). It is not only that the facts are difficult to establish; current notions about gender violence are decisive: gender violence is incompatible – contradictory – with the image of

a world of knowledge in which authority is scientific, decisions collegial and power relations under control.

Absence of data, statistics in particular, is another notable feature of the sexual-harassment-at-university issue. Advocacy and support groups have collected personal accounts that enable us, if not to measure, at least to become aware of how widespread this type of violence is. Moreover, the testimony reflects some of the general characteristics of gender violence: the vast majority of victims are women; the violence consists of a succession of small acts, utterances or interactions that would seem harmless and insignificant to a third party; the effects of these events on victims are either concealed or minimized. Other aspects are more specific to the academic environment; e.g., the importance of intellectual recognition; individualization of work relations between thesis supervisors and doctoral students; and perpetrator behaviour that many are aware of but that goes unreported, giving perpetrators a sense of impunity. The personal accounts lead the authors to the conclusion that colleagues and students concerned to protect the institution feel “solidarity with the accused” (p. 169). Last, they note that victims can initiate criminal proceedings (though they are costly for them in all respects) or a civil suit (though rulings in them often go against the victim).

The collection of texts edited by Martine Delvaux, Valérie Lebrun and Laurence Pelletier presents different material to explain the emergence and persistence of sexual harassment at university. As the introduction points out, the “underlying cause” of harassment is “systematic sexism”. The authors do add, however, that “nothing in these stories is simple, neither women’s desire nor men’s power, neither women’s power nor men’s desire”. Many of the texts stress that while the university is a world that allows perpetrators to go relatively unpunished, the student-teacher relationship does spark desires (for recognition, sexual desire, etc.). In their dialogue, professor Isabelle Boisclair and her student Catherine Dussault-Frênette explain how some [professors] take advantage of the admiration they elicit, just as some [female students] get caught in a game of seduction that is difficult to distinguish from a desire to please the man or woman supervising their research – “as if, with her body, her presence, the girl immediately set off a Don-Juan-producing machine” (p. 42), as another contributor to the volume puts it. What then does it mean for women to “refuse to remain caught in the fantasy of the master” (p. 99)? The issue is not just one of consent but also of female students’ desires and the means professors have for imposing theirs.

The book also calls attention to and investigates sexual harassment narratives, and in so doing identifies another explanation for why harassment persists. Often those narratives consist in gossip or confidences, stories that everyone seems to know something about, if only from a distance. The narratives do not disentangle true from false, important information from mere anecdote. Victims often remain silent for fear of not being supported or even believed, a

reality also attested by ANEF data. The fact that violent acts get transformed into sexual harassment “stories” ultimately works to turn them into fictions, complete with recurring and in some cases archetypal situations and characters ranging from Narcissus to Lolita, figures in which victims get trapped, as this change works to de-realize the facts, including, perhaps, in the eyes of the victims themselves. While the editors enjoin us to “kill the fiction” (p. 11), the book also shows that harassment, like love, is made of stories – one question then being, who writes the roles?

The two books pose questions that are central to understanding sexual violence at university and that should inspire new research. Two such avenues might be how conditions for teaching and producing knowledge change in a context of university reform, and differences in sexual violence and perception of it by academic discipline.

Mathieu TRACHMAN

DEBEST Charlotte, 2014, *Le choix d'une vie sans enfant* [Choosing childlessness], Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, *Le Sens social*, 216 p.

In this book, based on her doctoral thesis, Charlotte Debest puts forward a sociological analysis of SEnVols – a suggestive acronym⁽¹⁾ she found to designate “voluntarily childless” persons; that is, who have chosen not to become parents. She draws on a set of 51 life accounts of men and women over age 30, all of who responded to her call for interviews and therefore described themselves as voluntarily childless. Debest’s respondents either did or did not have an intimate partner and were included regardless of sexual orientation or conjugal situation.

The book fills a gap in our scientific knowledge on the question, and in so doing attests to the invisibility in French society of the absence of desire for children. That invisibility is an effect of social pressure. Voluntary childlessness levels, which can be thought of as a symmetrical assessment of fertility levels, have only been investigated in France since 1995. According to the results of the 2011 Fecond survey (Fertility-contraception-sexual dysfunctions), 5% of persons aged 18-50 and 3.5% of persons reporting an intimate partner are voluntarily childless.

In her review of the French context, where pro-birth policies together with relatively late birth control legislation have tended to favour parenthood, Debest demonstrates that social norms are always inscribed in specific historical dynamics. France seems particularly attached to an essentialist vision of the family structure, in which having children is often perceived as a natural, logical step in the transition to adulthood (p. 129). The author’s research not only performs the valuable service of exposing the forms of our French social organization, but also situates them in a gender system that “ascribes the reproductive sphere to women and ... the productive sphere to men” (p. 15).

The notion of “reconciliation”, especially of family and work life, is useful in understanding how SEnVols come to conceptualize sexual inequality in the parent relationship. Mentioning examples of mothers in their families or among their friends, the women interviewed cite the constraints imposed on those women by the tasks of rearing and caring for children. More women than men report “having other priorities”. But their criticism of compulsory motherhood based on observed experience is also philosophical; in other words, these women refuse to be assigned a status that would prevent them from defining themselves as individuals. They also mention unequal task sharing, wherein women are the ones forced to reconcile their occupational, parental, conjugal and personal lives. To support this argument, they cite several examples of women – and women only – who chose part-time jobs or a fall in occupational status when their children were born. Conversely, fatherhood does not seem

(1) [SEnVol stands for *sans enfant volontairement*, i.e., voluntarily childless. The French verb *s’envoler* means “to take flight”. A French speaker reading the acronym is put in mind of the verb and its meaning – Trans.]

to require men to change their schedules: a large majority maintain the same degree of involvement in their job. This explains why, in interviews with childless men, the issue of reconciling family and work life does not come up, a sign that these men do not project themselves into daily parental functions that are not first and foremost theirs. These accounts illustrate particularly well how, for the women questioned, not becoming a mother can represent the possibility of realizing individual aspirations similar to men's.

But though these criticisms are indeed mentioned in the study, they are far from being decisive in the choice of the women questioned. The strength of Debest's book also lies in her deconstruction of the prejudices associated with childlessness, notably the assumption that childless people lead sad and solitary lives. What comes through in this book is a positive vision of not wanting to have children, one where considerable importance is attached to the ideas of greater individuality and "freedom" in the sense of having time for oneself. Positive also because this choice enables people to refuse to take on the responsibilities involved in determining the life of another human being, in raising that person and therefore being a major source of his or her potential suffering. Also, contrary to widespread representations, the survey shows that a majority of childless individuals have and live with an intimate partner – whereas the tendency in France is to associate conjugality with fertility. The fact that couples choose not to become parents is here considered decisive in overcoming societal injunctions for women to fit into the "image of the ideal woman who combines professional, parental and conjugal life while fulfilling herself personally", with all the difficulties this entails (p. 167).

The book also analyses childless respondents' trajectories in interaction sociology terms, specifically Howard Becker's "deviant career" concept. SenVols assume the role of "outsiders" over a series of stages. The first is coping with social pressure that reminds them from the age of 25 that they are expected to become parents as this is the natural course of events. Questions from family and friends are therefore more focused on when they should have children than whether or not they want to, as this is taken for granted. After having to face – and declining to respond favourably to – these "calls to order", SenVols are called upon to "accept the label" they are then assigned and to develop strategies either to circumvent or directly confront the stigma that falls on them. By deferring the matter until some undetermined moment in the future, simply not answering questions about it, or answering with arguments in favour of their chosen way of life, they seek to define themselves as "singular individuals". Their "deviant career" continues to develop when they are assigned a type of personality in the course of social interactions – as if, by its very essence, their life choice implied certain personal traits. SenVols are regularly assumed to be "selfish", "not to like children", and "to be sexually different", i.e., unconstrained by the conjugal framework. Last, the feeling of belonging to a group, one that they describe in opposition to the group "parents", seems

confirmed by the fact that they construct relational networks made up primarily of persons who also have chosen not to have children. As a complement to the author's enlightening analyses of deviance from the norm and perceptions of it, this last observation supports theories of homophily by way of a seldom-cited variable: parenthood.

Here again we see that social pressure is heavier on women; the question of desiring children is addressed more specifically to them, as they are also considered "responsible" for that desire. Wanting to become a mother is a sort of guarantee of a woman's femininity, whereas absence of that desire raises suspicions about her in that regard. Men are certainly not exempt from these injunctions, but the question of fatherhood gets played out in somewhat different terms: their assigned function is transmission to descendants, and, in patrilineal societies particularly, transmission of the family name.

The shift of focus proposed by this book in its study of a "marginal" category in France powerfully reveals the operation of a norm that too often goes unmentioned. It also reveals gender asymmetries in representations of parenthood. However, as the author is fully aware, her sample is quite particular in that it is composed primarily of highly educated individuals who therefore possess strong argument skills. This limitation raises the question of how the discourse of not wishing to have children gets formulated among persons whose resources and educational attainment are lower. The work of creating and managing a deviant identity may vary by social milieu; also by political socialization and/or socialization through friendship. People's abilities to define themselves outside the norm and to cope with and parry labelling or stigmatization represent blind spots in Debest's analysis, in turn due to the methodology of finding respondents through a research call for interviews. Those abilities are likely not to be homogeneous.

Gaëlle MESLAY

Théry Irène, 2016, *Mariage et filiation pour tous. Une métamorphose inachevée* [Marriage and filiation for all: an incomplete metamorphosis]. Paris, Le Seuil, La République des idées, 128 p.

Irène Théry's latest work begins with an analysis of the violent opposition in France to the country's new law legalizing same-sex marriage in which she deconstructs the argument put forward at the time, especially by the "Manif pour tous" group of anti-gay marriage associations, that the law would lead to the effacement of the sexes. Throughout the book she demonstrates how proponents of this argument favour a model from bygone times, that of "hierarchical sexual complementarity". In her account of the historical process through which gender, marriage and filiation were constructed, it gradually becomes clear how this political debate emerged and what issues are involved. Nonetheless, when Théry affirms that the reason same-sex couples are the designated "scapegoats" in this affair is France's inability to reform its family law, one does wonder if that argument does not lead to underestimating the latent homophobia in opponent discourse.

Reviewing the history of the gender concept, Théry explains that it is used both to describe the social construction of sexual difference and to establish "the masculine/feminine distinction as a social distinction" (pp. 23-25). In the latter case, gender is often understood as a characteristic inherent in individuals themselves, an aspect of their identity. Each person is understood to comprise a "self" and a "body", or, to put it differently, a gender identity and a sex identity. The author points out that this distinction implies a clinical view of gender, one that anthropologists have criticized as socio-centric. Specifically, it has little relevance when it comes to understanding gender in socio-cosmic societies where the individual is defined by his or her different relationships with others. The relational perspective on gender that began to be developed in the 1980s and is applied here for its analytic scope, enables us to conceive of masculine and feminine as a "mode of social relationships". Contrary to the identity-centred notion, which leads us to distinguish relationships exclusively from the binary man/woman angle, these other theories – and this is their main contribution – show that "what is defined as masculine or feminine does not exist in and of itself but only as a product of the distinctions or divisions between what society expects from a sister, for example, and what it expects from a brother" (p. 35). The fact is that, depending on the type of relationship, social expectations may concern one sex or simply not differentiate between the sexes (an example being grandparent/grandchild); that is, they can be neutral or androgynous. Without contradicting or annulling the afore-cited hierarchical opposition between men and women, this perspective clarifies the fact that it is constructed on the basis of a broad range of "social attributions" that men and women are led to fulfil in the course of their interactions.

In the second chapter Théry reviews the major changes in the marriage institution in France since the establishment of civil marriage in 1792. In the

beginning, marriage was the society's means of socially organizing paternity, the assumption being that the husband of a parturient was the child's father. This was the only legitimate type of filiation, as having a child out of wedlock doomed women – and women only – to intense, lasting stigmatization. With regard to social attributions or obligations, the status of mother implied at the time that a woman was under her husband's authority, which led simultaneously to denying women's autonomy and individuality and hierarchically ordering, *de facto*, the sexes and family types. Conversely, since paternity tests were not possible, fatherhood could only be conceived in terms of status and the law: a biological father who was not the child's mother's husband could not be legally recognized as the father.

Gradually, however, with the legalization of divorce⁽¹⁾, which meant the marital tie could be broken, and the emergence of feminist demands, marriage became an institution wherein the couple was perceived as a pair engaged in an “egalitarian conversation”. “The principle of indissolubility [shifted] from marriage to filiation”, the latter becoming independent. The family acquired a status outside marriage, as children now had the same rights regardless of their parents' marital situation. Moreover, in case of divorce, the principle of shared custody, followed by the co-parenting option, reduced the asymmetry between fathers and mothers.

But the supposed exclusivity of the filiation tie masks all situations where begetting and parenting are not performed by the same persons. Théry explains that with the development of adoption and assisted reproduction technologies for heterosexual couples in France, French doctors demanded – and obtained – the abolition of earlier ties (biological, reproductive) so that the couple seeking to become parents could better “[mime] the procreation model” (p. 102). We see that while opponents of filiation for same-sex couples claim this would deny the fact that such couples cannot biologically conceive, that lie is actually inherent in the ART system: people are not allowed access to the identity of their biological parents in France, making it impossible for any relationship to develop between donor and receiver.

Théry offers both a profound critical analysis of our French filiation system together with real alternatives to that system, her aim being to obtain reform of the country's family law. Establishing a biological parent status, as distinct from “initiator”, would make role complementarity in “engendering projects” visible and thereby put an end to confusion about who the “real parent” is, confusion that is currently used to accuse same-sex couples of falsification.

Gaëlle MESLAY

(1) Fault divorce in 1884; mutual consent in 1975.

WOOD Jonas, 2016, *Essays on Socio-Economic Differentiation in European Fertility. The Impact of Economic Context and Social Policy*, Brussels, University Press Antwerp, 222 p.

In this book, Jonas Wood offers a comprehensive analysis of socio-economic differentiation in reproductive behaviour. Extensive geographical coverage also enables him to take into account differences in economic context and social policy across European countries.

The book opens with a well-written introductory chapter summarizing the relevant theoretical ideas; the author presents not only the standard economic arguments (new home economics) but also cultural theories (second demographic transition) and the institutional aspects (welfare state, norms, gender equality) of differential fertility.

The four main chapters present original empirical analysis; an additional chapter focuses on data quality. Each chapter is structured as an independent research article as the book is derived from Wood's doctoral research at the University of Antwerp under the supervision of Karel Neels. Jonas Wood holds a PhD in sociology but his work is strongly interdisciplinary, covering cultural, economic, demographic and institutional aspects. Wood also holds a Master's degree in statistics and uses sound statistical and econometric methods.

The question of how varying configurations of economic and institutional characteristics across European countries coincide with different demographic behaviours is of strong policy relevance in a context where below-replacement fertility levels represent a serious challenge to the financial sustainability of pension systems and public health care. The macro-economic contexts Wood addresses vary from education expansion to economic fluctuations and family policy settings. The combination of individual-level survey data, primarily from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) and the European Social Survey (ESS), and aggregate-level data (OECD, World Bank) make a cross-national comparative approach possible. The surveys focus on fertility, education and employment viewed retrospectively at the time of the interview (i.e., information is available on length of education, time elapsed since first cohabitation, since first job, etc.).

Throughout the work, the issue of self-selection bias for higher order childbearing behaviour is accurately taken into account. Women at risk for a second or third birth may constitute a selective group as they already have one child. Self-selection into the group "at risk" for having a second or third child could be linked to socio-economic characteristics such as education. The opportunity costs of having a first child are heaviest for highly educated women, and those who decide to do so despite those costs might have particular characteristics – e.g., being more family-oriented – that are potentially related to the probability of their having more than one child. This selectivity may affect the impact of education on the transition to second or third childbirth as well as sensitivity to economic and institutional context. To control for this,

Wood proposes a random effects discrete-time hazard model, in which the random effect is included at the individual level (shared frailty). This allows for controlling for time-constant unobserved individual-level characteristics and therefore captures selectivity in connection with the transition to parenthood. The author finds that women-specific characteristics connected to timing of entry into motherhood have little impact on the educational gradient in progression to second and third births. Selection in terms of timing and occurrence of first births thus does not affect educational patterns in progression to second and third births. This is an important and helpful insight for research based on datasets where the panel is too short to apply shared frailty models.

The first research chapter or essay investigates the educational gradient in completed fertility. Cohort parity progression ratios to the first, second and third birth up to age 39 are estimated as a function of education for women born between 1940 and 1961 on the basis of data from 13 European countries (GGS). The regression-based proportions are then illustrated by cohort and education level. No causal relationship was found, since not only is the number of children a woman has at the end of her childbearing life likely to be influenced by education level but fertility level may also determine education level. For entry into parenthood, Jonas Wood finds a significant negative correlation: the lower the education, the higher the cohort progression ratio to first birth. The negative educational gradient is weak in Norway, Belgium, the UK and CEE countries and strong in Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. In all countries, the negative coefficient decreases between cohorts 1940/1944 and cohorts 1956/1961. For second births, country results are more heterogeneous. The educational gradient remains negative in Italy, but is also negative in Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania and Russia. A U-shaped curve (i.e., women with mid-level education showing the lowest progression ratio to second births) is found for France and Hungary. The pattern is flat in Australia, the UK and Spain, at least for the youngest observed cohort (1956/1961), while a positive pattern is found for Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium. For third births, a negative association is confirmed for the UK, Spain, Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania and Russia, while the pattern is U-shaped for Norway, Australia, Belgium and France. For all birth orders, the strongest variation in between-country progression ratios is found for highly educated women (tertiary education).

The strong country heterogeneity points to the importance of country context. Institutions seem to play a crucial role, especially for highly educated women, when it comes to deciding whether and when to start or enlarge a family. The finding of consistent negative educational gradients in first births across Europe is of high policy relevance. Jonas Wood mentions work-family incompatibility as a possible explanation for countries with a negative gradient, but between-country differences in institutional settings are not explicitly modelled in this chapter. Multilevel modelling is provided in the other chapters. However, to reinforce the hypothesis of the importance of institutional context

in this chapter, it might have been helpful to perform regressions by country groups to distinguish those with high versus those with low work-life balance support. Another shortcoming, which the author acknowledges, is that due to missing data in the GGS, partners' characteristics are not controlled for and male fertility decisions not modelled. Controlling only for female education means a risk of capturing male characteristics but interpreting them as female ones. For example, assortative mating can lead to progression ratios that are lower for highly educated women if their likewise highly educated partners tend to have lower fertility preferences. Another possible interpretation is that women's progression ratios are higher in households less subject to budget constraints due to those women's high-income partners. These claims are purely hypothetical, but they illustrate the importance of taking into account interactions between women and their partners. Without information on male education, we do not know the extent to which educational gradients vary by gender or how interdependent they are. The results must therefore be interpreted with caution—a challenge that the author meets very well.

The second research chapter investigates the relation between economic conditions and the timing of first births for 22 European countries (including CEE countries) from 1970 to 2005 (ESS). Differences between regions, age groups, education levels and institutional context are taken into account by applying multilevel discrete-time event-history models of first birth hazards. The macro-level variables used are the consumer-price index and unemployment rates, which are interacted with country cluster dummies (Northern, liberal, Western, CEE, and Southern). Wood finds that for all countries combined, labour force entry is an important precursor to motherhood, especially for highly educated women. Aggregate unemployment is found to be negatively associated with first birth hazards, especially in Southern European countries. In Nordic and Western European countries, highly educated women are more sensitive to aggregate-level economic context than in CEE and Southern countries.

As in the previous chapter, the survey data does not allow for controlling for partner characteristics, which is why potential interactions between women and their partners are not discussed. However, the results indirectly provide some indications on those interactions. For example, Wood finds that in Southern Europe, women's labour market status and job duration is not significant for entry into motherhood whereas aggregate unemployment is. This strongly suggests that it is the partner's employment status that is crucial in the family's decisions on whether and when to have a first child. In countries with a dominant male breadwinner model, having a partner who is unemployed or at risk of losing his job represents a major barrier to starting a family. In more gender-egalitarian countries, where women as well as their partners generate family income, it is women's own successful labour market integration that emerges as an important determinant of motherhood. Thus, despite the

lack of information on partner characteristics, multilevel modelling does allow for discussing some potential partner interactions.

Multilevel models are also applied in the third research chapter, where Wood investigates the impact of family policy on childbearing for seven European countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK). Availability of formal childcare for children aged 0-2 and family allowance amounts are modelled as second birth determinants, differentiated by age, country and education. Survey data (mainly from GGS) is combined with aggregate-level data from the OECD Family Data Base (1980-2002). Policy measures are found to encourage the transition to a second child for all educational groups. However, family allowances are found to have a stronger positive impact on propensity of second childbirth for women with little education, while childcare availability has a more positive impact for highly educated women. Significant positive impact is mainly driven by between-country variation, whereas within-country variations in second childbirths over time are much less related to variations in family policy settings. The weak results for models with country-fixed effects are probably due to the fact that the time period only runs to 2002. In European countries with relatively high fertility levels, childcare coverage increased during the 2000s, a change that went together with an increase in total fertility rates back to replacement level.

The limited time period is also problematic in the last research chapter, where Wood analyses the impact of parental leave (uptake after birth of first child) on parity progression in Belgium, France and Germany. For Germany and France, the time period studied runs only to 2004. During that period in Germany, parental leave was paid as a lump-sum transfer for a maximum period of 24 months. This form of parental leave was criticized for its polarizing effects: it detached many women from the labour market, particularly those with little education, whereas others, particularly highly educated women, often did not benefit from leave because the income compensation was too low. In line with this observation, Wood finds no significant effect of women's parental leave uptake on transition to higher order births in Germany except for women with little education, and a significantly negative effect for men. The effect of lump-sum parental leave is found to be positive in France and Belgium, but it is important to keep in mind that in those countries leave is paid for a much shorter time period for the first child.

Germany reformed its parental leave system in 2007, following the Swedish model by introducing a wage substitution for a shorter time period (67% of former net wage for a maximum of 12 months). The purpose of the reform was to encourage female employment before and after childbirth. The income effect is supposed to facilitate transition to higher order births. However, the expected positive effects are slow in coming, as childcare coverage is still low in Germany and many women have difficulty returning to a full time job after parental

leave. As Wood explains, this shows that the impact of parental leave depends not only on its design features but also on family policy context. The author concludes that, given the fact that different educational groups respond differently to institutions, comprehensive family policy packages are needed rather than singular measures.

Overall, by bringing together the different research chapters into one book, Wood succeeds exemplarily in highlighting the interplay between individual characteristics and institutional context and the importance of the latter for fertility decisions. He illustrates clearly and intelligibly that for highly educated women work-family compatibility is of major importance, while for women with relatively little education, exclusion from the labour market represents the major barrier to starting and enlarging a family.

The author reaches this conclusion based on solid empirical modelling that carefully and correctly takes into account selection effects. The control for differential selectivity on the risk set for higher order births is applied by mobilizing retrospective survey data. The longitudinal design makes shared frailty models possible, which model births as repeated events with a random term at the individual level. The pitfall of using GGS and ESS data is lack of data on partners and of more detailed information on employment characteristics (weekly working hours, for example). Other European survey data, such as the European Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), include partner information and more specific employment features and thus could be used as alternative datasets. However, the short follow-up in SILC does not allow for applying shared frailty models and the quality of fertility measures is not perfect either. It therefore seems that analyses of socio-economic differentiation in European fertility based on GGS, ESS and SILC data are complementary approaches. Combining and comparing the different results seems a fruitful direction for future research.

Angela GREULICH

NOWIK Laurent, LECESTRE-ROLLIER Béatrice (eds.), 2015, *Viellir dans les pays du Sud. Les solidarités familiales à l'épreuve du vieillissement* [Ageing in Southern countries: can family solidarity meet the needs of older adults?], Paris, Karthala, 304 p.

Studies in French of old age and ageing in Southern countries are few and far between. Why should we be interested in this issue in that part of the world when the countries in question are accurately described as “young”? This collective work answers just that question in connection with an unprecedented situation at the scale of humanity as a whole: demographic ageing and its corollary, the rapidly changing age structure of Southern countries. Moreover, Michel Loriaux, one of the first demographers to draw attention to the ineluctable “grey revolution”⁽¹⁾, wrote the preface.

The preface is followed by twelve chapters and a DVD (accompanied by a text in the form of a dialogue between an old Moroccan shepherdess, the documentary director and an ethnologist); seventeen researchers from various disciplines and geographic situations contributed, five working in the “South”, twelve in the “North”, not to mention the filmmaker and a consultant in gerontology engineering. Most of the authors had participated in an international conference on the subject in Meknes, Morocco, in 2011⁽²⁾, the first conference exclusively focused on ageing in Southern countries. The book further develops ideas put forward at that conference on the more narrowly focused topic of family solidarities and ageing. The issue discussed is not so much demographic ageing as the social dimension of individual ageing. And as fertility in these countries remains at relatively high levels, the authors speak of “gerontogrowth”, i.e., an increase in absolute numbers of old persons due to increased longevity.

The book discusses ten countries: Uganda, Madagascar, Tanzania, Senegal, Morocco, India, Mayotte [a French *département* and region], Argentina, Armenia and Georgia. None have a universal social security system; the task of caring for the older generations falls to the younger, who have numerous difficulties to cope with, particularly labour market integration, a situation that forces them to take difficult, painful decisions in the case of old parents with health problems. This is perhaps the common denominator of all these otherwise very different countries. However that may be, all these societies are simultaneously undergoing several transitions: demographic, epidemiologic, nutritional and political.

We cannot discuss ageing without having defined the term. At what age does a person become “old”? In countries with universal retirement coverage,

(1) Cf. Loriaux M., Remy D., Vilquin E., eds., 1990, *Populations âgées et révolution grise: Les hommes et les sociétés face à leurs vieillissements*, Proceedings of the Chaire Quetelet '86 conference, Louvain la Neuve, Editions CIACO, 1,118 p.

(2) Cf. *Actes du Colloque international de Meknes*, 17-19 March 2011, “Vieillesse de la population dans les pays du Sud. Famille, conditions de vie, solidarités publiques et privées, ... États des lieux et perspectives”, Les Numériques du Ceped [Centre Population et Développement], Université Paris Descartes]. Free in full on the Ceped website, <http://www.cephed.org/cdrom/meknes>

the old age threshold is defined by retirement from occupational activity (usually at the age of 60) and entitlement to a pension. What is the situation in Southern countries, where only a minority have a pension and most people aged 60 and over continue working? Can the same indicator be used under these circumstances? In their introductory chapter, editors Laurent Nowik and Béatrice Lecestre-Rollier critique the indicators generally used to assess demographic ageing and old age in these countries. Sadio Ba Gning's contribution (Chapter 5) argues for distinguishing between biological and social age: "to age is to be the age of the social reality covered by that process". Cecile Lefèvre and Loucineh Guevorkian recommend close examination of respondent statements on age and its meaning, conditions for registering date of birth, and the existence and quantity of civil registries in Southern countries (p. 276). And most authors note that entry into old age is marked by new health problems that force individuals to disengage from social, family and productive activities.⁽³⁾

While standard indicators may not effectively apprehend old age in non-Western socio-cultural contexts, there is also the crucial issue of measuring the social realities of ageing at the regional or national level. Valérie Golaz et al. (Chapter 2) note that national data on Uganda (from the Demographic and Health Surveys, for example, household surveys, or target surveys on financial transfers) do not give access to old persons' vulnerability "because [they] are based on representative samples that do not contain enough persons aged 60 and over for detailed statistical analysis. Above all, we are far from local representativeness, a major strong point of population censuses". The methods applied by the various contributors therefore combine quantitative and qualitative data (population counts, population observatory reports, surveys; interviews and ethnographic observation), small questionnaire surveys and secondary data analyses (literature reviews, legislative texts, association reports, etc.).

Are the various types of family solidarity operative in these countries enough to cope with increases in the number of so-called old people? Or have they already reached the limit of what they can do? How is solidarity practiced? What, precisely, are the sources of vulnerability? These are so many cross-sectional questions, here partially answered by way of case studies. From changes in family structure (adoption of the nuclear family model, youth emigration, having fewer children), rapid urbanization, the HIV-AIDS epidemic, higher educational attainment levels (particularly for women), individualization of trajectories, land saturation, to changes in marriage, etc., the complex problems that family solidarity is called upon to handle puts it under intense strain. The authors conclude, however, that it will hold up rather than fall apart given the many strategies individuals develop: varied cohabitation, assistance segmentation, individualized or elective solidarity, the outsourcing

(3) All identify age 60 as the old age threshold, with the exception of one (Chapter 4), who does not specify any age.

of family assistance in migration contexts, complementary public and private solidarity, etc. Those solidarities, meanwhile, are gendered, polymorphous (financial, emotional, etc.), multidimensional (from ascendants to descendants and vice-versa) and adapted to donor context.

All the authors use an intergenerational approach to old age; some relate individual trajectories to the events those respondents experienced and the economic, social and political contexts they have lived in. They are also attentive to differences in the realities of ageing by whether one lives in a rural or urban context and to differences in ageing by sex.

Written for specialists and non-specialists alike, the book is a precious contribution to the study of old age and ageing in Southern countries, an as yet emerging research topic and an issue that is sure to loom increasingly large on policy agendas in the decades to come. I would have just two small criticisms. First, there is some confusion of age and generation categories, as attested by the undifferentiated use of terms “older persons” and “elders”. It seems to me the two should be distinguished and yet analysed together to account more clearly for inter and intra-generation relationships. Second, there are several errors or omissions in bibliography references (omission of publication dates, author first names, pagination); we have been accustomed to more careful editing from Karthala Publishing.

Tom BRIAUD

BOËTSCH Gilles, GUEYE Lamine, MACIA Enguerran, JAFFRÉ Yannick, BOURDELAIS Patrice (eds.), 2015, *Santé et sociétés en Afrique de l'Ouest* [Health and societies in West Africa], Paris, CNRS, 320 p.

This collective work is the fruit of an ambitious programme bringing together researchers from many disciplines, including biologists, medical epidemiologists, ecology specialists, geographers, sociologists and anthropologists; a multidisciplinary team engaged in both North-South and South-South collaborative projects. The methodological choice to work with local populations rather than merely on them is instrumental to understanding how international health programmes are appropriated at the local level, specifically in connection with family and social organization and symbolic conceptions of the body and illness. The studies presented here were conducted in three West African cities: Dakar, Bamako and Ouagadougou (a greater number of chapters on Dakar). The first of the five issues discussed is the health impacts of pollution (especially in terms of allergies); the second, the combined effect of the environment and societal changes on non-transmissible chronic pathologies in the context of a globalized food system (rises in obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes). Here we see the impact these emerging pathologies are having in West Africa and how Southern countries with little in the way of local treatment facilities are “catching up” with Northern ones for prevalence. The other three issues are transmissible infections (particularly malaria and schistosomiasis or bilharzia), health services in West Africa (a renewal of approaches and methods), and lifestyle changes in the region and their health impacts.

The book’s main contribution is surely its focus on contemporary changes and the fact that it discusses health issues in the context of globalization; i.e., of circulating images, representations, knowledge and bodily practices. The book recalls that Africa will have new challenges to cope with in the coming years, a major one being caring for older persons. Until recently the aged were treated with consideration and respect in accordance with traditional values. They are now often perceived as a useless burden by new generations caught up in an individualization process due in large degree to urbanization.

While the book shows the persistence of older representations (the traditional values of modesty, self-control, what may be considered an overweight body), West African societies are not treated as static or isolated but rather situated in the global context. The book helps to combat received ideas, recalling, for example, that high blood pressure is just as widespread in Western societies as in African cities, though there is much more cause for concern in the latter because the population knows little about this pathology, meaning that monitoring and treatment rates are low. The book also discusses how sexuality is socially organized and operates in urban contexts, stressing how new means of communication open the way to new gender relations. West African societies, especially cities, are currently undergoing lifestyle changes related to particular

housing and economic situations as well as social transformations facilitated by development of the media (television, radio and internet) and considerable North-South and South-South migration, which mixes populations and works to circulate ideas.

Clémence SCHANTZ