

**Moniz, Tomas (ed.). (2016). Rad Families: A Celebration. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.**

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The book “Rad Families: A Celebration,” edited by Tomas Moniz, is a compilation of different stories from parents and non-parents about their hardships and accomplishments in thoughts of raising children. The book explores topics that are often excluded from conventional parenting books which incorporates different forms of writing: short essays, interviews, lists, and many more. "Rad Families: A Celebration" showcases diverse points of view from different contributors—from anarchists, feminists, incarcerated people, queers, trans, non-whites, to people who suffers from mental illness— that share their real-life experiences. Topics about birth, to gender, to incarceration, to adoption and other types of parenthood are touched by the book, which is highly relevant today in such diverse world. This book not just illustrates the new and seasoned mothers and their struggles, but also different fathers and their adversities with parenthood. The diversity of experiences of these peoples is raw which makes “Rad Families: A Celebration” inspirational and introspective.

Most parents suffered from stress-induced insomnia. They would rather sleep than read, but “Rad Families: A Celebration” is easy, yet a very entertaining book to read. Moniz unconventionally organized the book. He divided the book into four parts and in each part, two to three topics are being discussed. The beauty of this book is that readers can start from any part of the book. If a father has some questions, he can flip straight to the "Ask a Dad" section of the book,

or if he wants entertainment, he can just flip in the “interview sections”. Most of the content of the book are short passages that are great for parents who can only sneak away from their reality for a few minutes. It is a great book for people who are deprived of time, but still want to read to be inspired.

Unlike a regular parenting book that only gives advice and the “do’s and don’t” of parenting, “Rad Families: A Celebration” also covers the misadventures and different journeys of various types of people. Parents can learn from it or simply remind themselves that they are not alone. Consequently, Moniz arranged the book to look like a discussion forum in an online blog; this format of writing reminds readers that other people are going through the same circumstances. Nathan Torp said in his excerpt, “Hopping that Train: Advice to Scared Fathers,” that “you can’t do it alone; find yourself a supportive and healthy community” (p. 181). In a world with such diverse parenting, minorities such as single parents, homosexual parents, or trans, they can easily feel alone and feel judged by the society. Social norms have condescending expectations to conform with the rest of society, but Moniz’s work makes individuals realize that other people are going through the same circumstances and they are not alone.

The book explores the topic that parenting has nothing to do with gender, nor biology. A part of the book titled, “How Fathers Can Help Fight Patriarchy” exemplifies gender-bending; the list goes on about how fathers should do their “kid’s hair, cook, clean, and [do] other responsibilities that ‘women’ usually do” (p. 74). Moniz incorporated the idea that men are equal to women throughout the whole book. It is refreshing to hear so much masculine thoughts about parenting because most parenting books are heavily feminized or directly pointed at women.

Another example is the first part of the book. The first part is about birth and how different parents conceived in a variety of ways, but almost all the stories and sections of this part were written by men. It is very surprising since women are the ones who carry the baby and experience the giving birth part. Nevertheless, the book uses men to explain the whole journey to show that men also have a part in childbirth and conception. Moniz illustrates the other side of the story that society barely hears. He is trying to show that men are parents too because sometimes other books centralize mothers as the primary person who takes care of children.

Parenting has nothing to do with biology. In the book, a queer guy wants children, so he got into the foster system wanting to be a single-parent. He "struggled with what it meant to be a 'parent' versus what it meant to be 'someone who helps out with kids' " (p. 236). Going back to the prehistoric ages, society has ingrained in peoples' minds that to become a parent you have to be related by blood. However, in today's society, individuals are learning to be more open-minded and more acceptable to the fact that anyone can be a parent. Moniz's book demonstrates this by adding different people's perspectives who are adoptive parents, trans, etc. Moniz aims to "create a new way to talk about parenting and loving... that includes all adults and genders and family structures" (p. 259). The authors of the book are trying to carry out the message that the word "parent" means becoming a child's support system and a role model. Helping a child (who is not biologically yours) to grow and foster should not be seen negative, but should be celebrated.

Tom Moniz conveys the idea that parents do not have all the answers and everyone is still learning. Jesse Palmer said in his passage, "Learning to Be Human," that he is not learning "about babies or being a parent, but about what it means to be human and what is important about life"

(p. 53). Moniz wants to teach readers that parenting is not just about individuals raising children to be good citizens. He utilizes it in this book to explain that parenting is about learning one's self and by doing so, individuals discover humility and knowing one's limitations. Moniz provides collected essays written by people who are all still learning, which makes the book sincere and raw. It captures the satisfaction and strains of parenting, which makes the book realistic. Moniz knows that a new generation of parents is rising and each parent is different from everyone else. Some are single parents, some are unable to conceive, some are in homosexual relationships, some adopted kids, and some are the standard parents (mom and dad). Moniz added entries that will speak more to readers than others, but he remains true to the point that everyone is still learning. The book helps readers to understand that parenthood means learning to "love without ownership, to understand the sublime beauty of life, [and] to honour the moment[s]" (p. 1). It is okay to be "messy, and loving and emotional and scarred and committed" (p. 258) because everyone is still learning.

Tomas Moniz assembled the book "Rad Families: A Celebration" to strive to expand diversity with a more inclusive approach. He welcomed and embraced distinctive stories from different gender and ethnic groups to define the new generation of families and parenting. The book could be used in disciplines such as sociology, gender studies, or simply for entertainment. I think that the book is a reflection to most parents—that being a mother or a father is hard. However, Moniz's collection of essays achieved to deliver the message that parenting serves a purpose despite the trials it comes with. I found "Rad Families: A Celebration" an easy and enjoyable read. Reading Tomas Moniz's work made me realize how my parents raised me and the hardship it came

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with it. It is a free-flowed book that anyone can pick up and be engaged in any of the topics. It is an awareness to the public that the world is changing and an open mind is what the world needs. The topic of parenting might not be for everyone, but the book is interestingly captivating even if a person is single with no dependent children. I would recommend it to anyone willing to expand their knowledge about different types of parenting.