

R F A S

Revue française des affaires sociales

Call for Multidisciplinary Papers on:

“Pathways of Parenthood”

For the October–December 2019 issue

The special issue will be coordinated by

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This call for papers is addressed to researchers in sociology, educational sciences, anthropology, political science, demography, economics, philosophy, and history

Articles are due by Monday, April 1, 2019.

Research on parenthood⁴ has increased over the past two decades in the humanities and social sciences (Neyrand, 2016; Bachmann et al., 2016). Renewed interest in this topic grows out of the important role of children and families in contemporary Western societies and in the family (Déchaux, 2014, Court, 2017). It is also the result of a growing but diffuse concern with “good parenting” (Martin, 2014). This attention to a certain form of “educational success” implies that parents should accompany their children’s path to autonomy and weave a unique and particular bond

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⁴ Parenthood is “a neologism used by both child and family professionals, in the political and media lexicon, and whose roots can be found in the human and social sciences” (Martin, 2003). It is used here with reference to work on parenting conditions and function.

with them (De Singly, 2009, Le Pape, 2012). Such parenting comes with different challenges at every stage of life.

Today, however, the state of knowledge on parenting has been segmented because it is often addressed via specific educational practices, for example, around food or the school, or through exclusive attention to a given age or period (often the time of birth or early childhood) or by analyses of specific categories of parents, e.g. gay or heterosexual parents, parents from popular backgrounds, single mothers, etc.

The objective of this issue of the RFAS is to decompartmentalize the field of research on parenting by considering it more as a dynamic process than a state (being a parent of a young child or of a school-age child) and by opening up analyses on periods and ages that have been studied less frequently. This choice therefore requires both an interest in parenthood throughout the child's life span and a departure from a linear vision of parenthood by analysing the biographical incidents that have a transient or lasting impact on it. The two axes of this call for contributions are therefore as follows:

- Parenthood at different stages of childhood
- Biographical incidents in parenthood

Parental practices and norms will therefore be analysed according to the parent's current situation (conjugal situation, socio-professional situation, etc.) but also according to his or her personal history (first experience of parenthood or a series of parental experiences over the years, etc.). It will be understood that parental education is not linear, that it varies from one child to another. It will also be understood that such education is constructed in relation to others, such as the environment of family and friends, as well as messages disseminated by the media, textbooks, and parent guides, whose influence varies considerably throughout life. Gender issues, which structure the trajectory of parents, will have to be taken into consideration.

Longitudinal analyses, whether qualitative (interview surveys, observations, or archives) or quantitative (mobilisation of national statistical surveys such as the ELFE survey or the permanent demographic sample), are strongly encouraged in connection with this choice of considering parenting as a whole as a dynamic process. This dynamic and longitudinal perspective, which will constitute the guiding

principle of this thematic number, may be applied differently depending on the authors' disciplinary background. Contributions in sociology, educational sciences, anthropology, political sciences, demography, economics, philosophy, history will be welcome. Research on the psychological dimension of the parent-child relationship is not expected in this thematic dossier, which focuses more on the conditions for exercising parenting.

The *Revue française des affaires sociales* wishes to assemble a Special Issue on pathways of parenthood, based on quantitative as well as qualitative contributions from the social sciences.

Theme 1: Parenthood at different stages of childhood

Parenthood is often considered from the perspective of “becoming a parent”, which means that we think of birth as being the pivotal moment (Charrier, Clavandier, 2014). However, the most recent surveys show that building one's identity as a parent begins well before birth and goes hand in hand with scientific progress and the diffusion of medical techniques such as ultrasound, for example, which embodies even more the unborn child and early attribution of gender identity (Pelage et al., 2016). Access to new reproductive technologies (NRTs) has also profoundly transformed the entry into parenthood and research is currently being conducted on the trajectories and parental norms of individuals who use them (Mathieu, Gourarie (ed.), 2016; *Ethnologie française*, 2017). However, more emphasis has been placed on homosexual couples than on heterosexual couples, and medical monitoring of pregnancy is still poorly described, unlike the other stages of the NRT procreation process. Surveys on the adoption process, whether in France or abroad, are based on the same social science perspective of redefining parenting by moving away from a bio-centred approach, i.e. by refusing to think of parenting solely in terms of its biological dimension. While the question of the “desire for a child”, traditionally examined from a demographic point of view, has therefore been the subject of a theoretical and empirical renewal over the past twenty years, many questions still remain about the birth of a child as well as about the process of “becoming a parent”, in particular concerning the social differences that mark the pathways of entry into parenthood. One could also ask: when and under what conditions is the announcement of this entry into parenthood made? For example, how does the

announcement of a pregnancy to family and friends take place? Moreover, if we know how the first child is received, we lack information on the arrival of the second or third child in the family, particularly in the context of reconstituted families.

The first years of childhood (0–3 years) represent a period which has been a particular object of investigation by the social sciences. The pioneering work of Jacques Donzelot and Luc Boltanski has opened up a long tradition of research on social control over parents, and more particularly over mothers, at these early stages of life. Their theses, which have been widely discussed (Darmon, 1999), provided a starting point for analysing the supervision of parental work by different institutions, as well as parental reception of childcare standards on sleep, nutrition, care, and health. Although the analysis of the production, dissemination and appropriation of “good parenting” standards is now a classic focus of research on parents of young children, some blind spots remain. For example, the success of “new pedagogies” (Montessori, benevolent education, etc.) has only been partially studied. The functioning of parent networks which have been developing particularly on the internet or applications such as WhatsApp has not been well explained. Who uses it and why? What are the ambitions of those who lead them and what norms are transmitted? In addition, the issue of childcare is a crucial issue for parents during these early years. This is why questions relating to the choices made by parents, their relationship with early childhood professionals, or the effects of public policies on the reconciliation of family and professional life are the subject of an extensive literature (Le Pape et al., 2017). However, parental childcare trajectory analysis is incomplete and may be the subject of further contributions in this thematic issue.

The following period, marked by the arrival of the child in the school system, has mainly been analysed around the issues related to his or her schooling. Therefore the focus of research on parenting at this age of life has been on “the student’s parent”. His choice of school, his educational strategies, and his apprenticeship of underlying school fundamentals are particularly well documented (Le Pape, van Zanten, 2009). We could focus here on less covered topics such as the choice of home schooling or the informal parental sociability that often occurs when the child enters school. Indeed, it can be hypothesized that educational standards, transmitted by medical knowledge or experience in the preschool period, are progressively transformed under the influence of those disseminated through the peer network, particularly via parents encountered at school. A second axis of analysis develops once the child has

access to a proposal of supervised leisure, in school as well as outside it. Parents' choices for/with their children show the educational values that are played out in sports or cultural activities. It is therefore a privileged angle of analysis to observe how parent-child transmission works (Octobre et al., 2010). Contributions that seek to specify and contextualize the different mechanisms, vectors and modalities of transmission would strengthen this thematic dossier. With the development of digital technology, analysis should be made of the development of retro-socialisation practices in which the direction of transmission is reversed (Le Douarin, 2014). Contributions that broaden the analysis of transmission to other content or spheres of activity will also be appreciated: the transmission of politics within the family (Percheron, 1993; Lignier and Pagis, 2017) might be the subject of particular attention. This could involve studying the transmission of explicitly political content, ideological and partisan positioning, etc. However it might also involve a broader approach to political socialization (Maurer, 2000), the processes and forms of learning (moral, educational, academic, religious, etc.) which, without being directly related to the political universe, can produce politicization effects.

Most research during adolescence takes up the modalities of parental control and the redefinition of the parent-child relationship. As for parental control, it has been known since the 1960s that the type of supervision exercised over adolescents varies according to social class (Kohn, 1959; Chamboredon, 1985; Kellerhals, Montandon, 1991). Proposals for articles that discuss these social mechanisms at work in parenting practices will be particularly appreciated. Work that addresses gender issues related to parental control should also be reviewed in this thematic issue. The learning of a certain "female respectability" in the family has been particularly well described (Mardon, 2011), including social variations in the control of girls' bodies and intimacy. While less analysis has been done on the control of boys' body appearance and sociability, it nevertheless opens up interesting perspectives on the parental expectations that weigh on them at this stage of life (Court, Menesson, 2015). Other forms of control, e. g., over risky behaviour, also occur at this time and could be analysed in this issue, particularly in what they reveal about the transformation of the parent-child relationship during adolescence. How do parents describe it? How do they cope with the tensions and misunderstandings that can arise when their child becomes more independent?

This progressive acquisition of autonomy among young people often overshadows the fundamental role of parents. The invisibility of parents depends, on the one hand, on the very definition of this period of life, which implies a gradual detachment of the young person from the family sphere. It is therefore essentially through their eyes that the evolution of the relationship with their parents as they enter adulthood is understood (Bidart, Pelissier, 2007). How, in a context of young people's demand for autonomy, do parents perceive their role towards their adult children? Some youth surveys also show the current difficulties faced by families in a situation marked by increasing difficulties in the employment integration of young people. Leaving parents' homes is no longer an irreversible process. Family support is no longer limited to a restricted period of time. The extension of dependence, linked to the precarious situation of young people, has important consequences on the relationship between parents and their adult children. The economic efforts but also the moral cost of this "new dependency" would benefit here from being described and analysed from the parents' point of view.

The end of the parental trajectory is often associated with children's autonomy and financial and family independence. Nevertheless, this assumption seems arbitrary to us. Indeed, this trajectory continues to evolve as events unfold, especially when children in turn become parents. In the work on grandparenthood, however, it is the grandchild/grandparent relationship that is often privileged. However, if the roles are redefined with the arrival of the new-born, we would like to understand how parents experience the entry into parentality of their children as well as the opposite, which implies analysing the relationship from the perspective of the prospective parents. We also invite contributions which not only focus on the moment of birth, but look on how the relationship evolves as this new child grows and participates, in its own way, in redefining the relationships between grandparents and their children.

A new turning point finally emerges when parents themselves become dependent. The practical organisation of their care, the mental burden on their children carers, is now increasingly well documented (Le Bihan, Mallon, 2017). It would also be interesting to take into account the perspective of aging parents themselves. How do they experience this entry into dependence? How do they organize themselves so that they do not have an impact on their children or to seek the help they feel they need? This reflection could extend to the practical and material organizations that some

parents set up to prepare for what will happen after their death (wills, funeral contracts, etc.), as if this parental function were to continue after their physical death.

Selected Bibliography⁵ on Theme 1:

Bachmann Laurence, Pascal-Éric Gaberel, Marianne Modak (2016), *Parentalité : perspectives critiques*, Lausanne, Editions ESSP, coll. « Les outils », 174 p.

Bidart Claire, Pellissier Anne (2007), « Entre parents et enfants : liens et relations à l'épreuve du cheminement vers la vie adulte », *Recherches et Prévisions*, n°90, p. 29–39.

Chamboredon Jean-Claude (1985), « Une sociologie de la petite enfance », *Espaces Temps*, p. 31–32.

Charrier Philippe et Clavandier Gaëlle (2013), *Sociologie de la naissance*, Paris, A. Colin, coll. U.

Court Martine and Christine Mennesson (2015), « Les vêtements des garçons. Goûts et dégoûts parentaux au sein des classes moyennes », *Terrains & travaux*, vol. 27, no. 2, p. 41–58.

Court Martine (2017), *Sociologie des enfants*, Paris, La Découverte, coll. Repères n°689.

De Singly François (2009), *Comment aider l'enfant à être lui-même ?*, Armand Colin.

Darmon Muriel (1999), « Les « entreprises » de la morale familiale », *French Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 17, n°3–4, p. 1–19.

Déchaux Jean-Hugues (2014), « Le sacre de l'enfant. Regards sur une passion contemporaine », *Revue française de sociologie*, vol.55, n°3.

Ethnologie française (2017), « Le corps reproductif », n°167.

⁵ The books and articles mentioned do not constitute, under any circumstances, a theoretical reference framework for the expected contributions. They were selected for the inventory they propose or the questions they are likely to raise about parenting.

Kellerhals Jean, Montandon Cléopâtre (1991), *Les stratégies éducatives des familles. Milieu social, dynamique familiale et éducation des préadolescents*, Genève, Delachaux et Niestlé.

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Mathieu Séverine, Gourarier Mélanie (dir.) (2016), « Parentés contemporaines », *Journal des Anthropologues*.

Le Bihan Blanche, Mallon Isabelle (2017), « Le poids des émotions. Une réflexion sur les variations de l'intensité de l'(entr)aide familiale auprès de proches dépendants », *Sociologie*, Presses Universitaires de France, p. 121–138.

Le Douarin Laurence (2014), « Usages des nouvelles technologies en famille », *Informations sociales*, n° 181, p. 62–71.

Le Pape Marie-Clémence, van Zanten Agnès (2009), « Les pratiques éducatives des familles », in Duru-Bellat M., van Zanten A. (dir.), *Sociologie du système éducatif. Les inégalités scolaires*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, collection L, p. 185–205.

Le Pape Marie-Clémence (2012), « L'art d'être un "bon" parent : quelques enjeux des nouvelles normes et pratiques éducatives contemporaines », *Les Cahiers français : documents d'actualité*, La Documentation Française, n°371, p. 36–42.

Le Pape Marie-Clémence, et al. (dir.) (2017), *Les modes d'accueil des jeunes enfants : des politiques publiques à l'arrangement quotidien des familles*, *Revue française des affaires sociales*, La documentation française.

Lignier Wilfried, Pagis Julie (2017), *L'enfance de l'ordre. Comment les enfants perçoivent le monde social*, Seuil, collection « Liber ».

Mardon Aurélia (2011), « La génération Lolita. Stratégies de contrôle et de contournement », *Réseaux*, p. 111–132.

Martin Claude (2003), *La parentalité en questions, perspectives sociologiques : rapport pour le Haut conseil de la population et de la famille*, La Documentation Française, rapport public pour le Haut Conseil de la Population et de la Famille.

Martin Claude (dir.) (2014), *Être un « bon » parent. Une injonction contemporaine*, Rennes, Presses de l'EHESP.

Maurer Sophie (2000), « École, famille et politique : socialisations politiques et apprentissage de la citoyenneté. Bilan des recherches en science politique », Dossier d'étude, n°15, Paris: CNAF.

Neyrand Gérard (2016), *L'évolution des savoirs sur la parentalité*, Bruxelles, yapaka.be.

Pelage Agnès, et al. (2016), « Alors c'est quoi ? Une fille ou un garçon ? Travail de préparation autour du genre pendant la grossesse », Paris, Le Seuil, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n°214, p. 30 à 45.

Percheron Annick (1993), *La socialisation politique*, Paris, Armand Colin.

Octobre Sylvie, et al. (dir.) (2010), *L'enfance des loisirs. Trajectoires communes et parcours individuels de la fin de l'enfance à la grande adolescence*, Ministère de la Culture - DEPS.

Theme 2: Biographical incidents in parenthood

While parenting practices and related norms evolve over time depending on parental history as well as that of their children, their age, and their environment in the broadest sense (family, friend, institutions, and professionals), this dynamic process is not a linear trajectory. Certain events such as a marital breakdown or an accident involving a child can disrupt it. Depending on circumstances, they can mark parents without really changing their parental trajectory. They can constitute transitions to new forms of parenting, or they can lead to a sudden and lasting change in the direction of the parental trajectory. The latter situation corresponds to the notion of bifurcation, of biographical rupture (Bessin, Bidard, Grossetti, 2009). Reactions to these incidents, the differences between men and women or between different social categories, can lead to a different understanding of parenting by examining what is usually not visible because it is self-evident.

In particular, it would be interesting to study how the parental function is exercised and defined when children and parents do not live together or no longer do so.

This is particularly the case after a marital separation. To what extent does marital separation lead to a rupture in terms of its consequences on the child's life? The practical modalities of managing the daily lives of separated families and their evolution over time are also poorly known (Unterreiner, 2018), and could strengthen this thematic dossier. How do they represent an evolution from past practices? Various studies also show that the standard of respect for the child's well-being in the event of separation strongly influences the declarations and behaviour of separating parents. The standard of "good divorce" where parents agree on the well-being of the child may nevertheless encounter the material and organizational constraints involved in separation. It would therefore be useful to study organizational changes over time, and to what extent the best interests of the child are paramount. Similarly, the particularities of separations in cases of domestic violence could be analysed. How does the obligation of parental understanding and co-parenting apply in these particular situations? Post-break-up parenting practices and norms may also vary according to the age of the children, their rank among their siblings, and their relationship with the adult who has been a parent to them: their own child, that of their spouse, the current couple's child, the child of a previous union, etc. These characteristics should be taken into account in the proposed articles. Moreover, the situation of siblings each of which has a different mode of residence has not been well studied and could be developed here. Finally, most studies on the specific role of the step-parent were conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and this dossier could provide an opportunity to discuss and extend the initial analyses that were conducted previously. One could, for example, ask how parental identity is constructed when becoming a step-parent is the first experience of parenting.

Parents and children can also be removed by judicial measures in the context of child protection (Potin, 2012, Pothet, 2016) or from parents in prison (Touraut, 2014). How, in these particular situations, do parents then define their role and their involvement with their child? How do they cope with these situations? What is the impact of institutions and professionals on this vision of their parenting role and on their practices? The evolution over time of these practices, in connection with the intervention of these people "outside" the family, also constitutes an interesting angle of analysis.

The parental trajectories after the loss of a child's and the biographical bifurcations that this bereavement can constitute, also represent an interesting and little studied axis of analysis. The disappearance of the child questions the parents' ability to define themselves as such. This thematic dossier could thus study these parental trajectories, potential differences between men and women, the role of family and institutions, etc. These questions arise particularly in perinatal bereavement, taking into account the particular status of the foetus or stillborn child, to whom the status of person is not always granted. The care of these bodies varies greatly according to the institutions, professionals, and territories concerned (Charrier, Glavandier, 2015). This diversity of care can influence parental trajectories that more or less favour the grieving process. The situations of widowed parents could also contribute to this issue.

Finally, lifestyles and relationships within families can be profoundly altered by the presence of a child with a disability (Ebersold, 2005) or with certain illnesses. Parents of children with disabilities stop working more often to care for their child and, when they work, are more likely to work part-time (HCFEA, 2018). They are also less likely to live together as a couple (HCFEA, 2018). Thus, analyses start from the suffering and difficulties that disability implies for parents and focus more particularly on the moment of the diagnosis. It would also be interesting to shift the angle of analysis in relation to these approaches by studying in particular how parental practices (educational, care, etc.) evolve over time with the knowledge that parents accumulate through professionals, internet forums, associations, etc. The way in which parents develop their characterisation of their child's disability and give it meaning is also an interesting axis of analysis. They are led to share their knowledge based on their daily experiences with those of professionals. Aude Béliard and Jean-Sébastien Eideliman (2014) propose understanding these characterisation processes through the notion of "diagnostic theories" (Béliard, Eideliman, 2014). On the one hand, these theories are influenced by the social characteristics of those who develop them, while they are also caught up in material and decision-making issues that influence them in turn. In addition, the characterisation of disability may differ between members of a child's entourage. Analysing how sharing or not sharing the same "vision" of disability influences relationships between family members could also contribute to this issue. In the event of disagreement, how do family members' responsibilities for children evolve? The

relationship between parents, professionals, and institutions are also elements that could be studied, particularly with regard to the schooling of children with disabilities. Finally, this raises the question of the construction of parental identity: how is it influenced by professionals and what resistance, if any, do parents have? In these situations, professionals and institutions are indeed present in the private sphere of the family, including wealthy families for whom this presence of external third parties is usually rarer. How is this relationship played out?

Selected Bibliography on Theme 2:

Béliard Aude, Eideliman Jean-Sébastien (2014), « Mots pour maux. Théories diagnostiques et problèmes de santé », *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. 55, n°3, p. 507–536

Bessin Marc, Bidart Claire, Grossetti Michel (dir.) (2010), *Bifurcations. Les sciences sociales face aux ruptures et à l'événement*, Paris, La Découverte, coll. Recherches.

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HCFEA (2018), *Accueillir et scolariser les enfants en situation de handicap, de la naissance à 6 ans et accompagner leur famille*, juillet.

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Potin Emilie (2012), *Enfants placés, déplacés, replacés : parcours en protection de l'enfance*, Toulouse, Érès, collection Pratiques du champ social.

Touraut Caroline (2014), « Parentalité partagée à distance : rôles parentaux et rapports conjugaux face à l'enfermement », *Champ pénal*, vol. XI, <https://journals.openedition.org/champpenal/8759> consulté le 08/10/2018.

Unterreiner Anne (2018), « Le quotidien des familles après une séparation. État de la recherche internationale sur l'organisation de la vie des familles de couples séparés », Ministère des Solidarités et de la santé, Les Dossiers de la Drees, n°27.

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rfas-drees@sante.gouv.fr

before Monday, 1 April 2019