

**Cassidy, Tanya and Abdullahi El Tom (eds.). 2015. *Ethnographies of Breastfeeding. Cultural Contexts and Confrontations*. London, New Delhi: Bloomsbury Academic. 255 pp. Hb.: \$94.00. ISBN: 9781472569257.**

Giving birth is a life-changing event, whether the baby is a woman's first or her fifth, or whether the woman is a surrogate. A new life means new responsibilities and new opportunities, and it is the job of parents, health institutions, and society as a whole to do their best for the new child. One of the most important aspects of new life is a baby's development, which is impossible without proper nutrition. It is parents who choose whether to give the baby breast milk (largely recognised as the healthiest option for a baby) or formula milk. *Ethnographies of Breastfeeding* is about these choices, how they are made, and what society, organisations and families can do to increase the quality of babies' lives by providing them with access to breast milk exclusively for at least six months, as recommended by the World Health Organisation.

Academics and researchers from the medical, social, and anthropological fields have come together to discuss the issues, traditions and possible solutions to making breastfeeding as natural as possible, drawing from examples from all over the world. Underlying this research is a problem that many countries are facing now: low percentages of breastfeeding. Many women begin their baby's life by breastfeeding, but few last for the recommended amount of time.

Professionals in their respective fields have written twelve different articles concerning breastfeeding. These articles can be divided into three groups. The first group discusses European breastfeeding culture, particularly as found in Ireland, Great Britain and France. The second discusses the possibilities and challenges of promoting milk banking as a solution for preterm babies and for mothers who do not have milk. Finally, the last group of articles explores the relationship between AIDS and breastfeeding, and is based largely on research conducted in African countries.

The variety of topics covered in this book can be viewed as both a strength and weakness. Such diversity offers a broad look at issues connected with breast milk. Readers can compare problems that mothers face across different countries, and come away with a general idea about the global status of breastfeeding. However, the book lacks deeper information and topical analysis. Each problem or theme is described quite briefly and would benefit from further research.

Some may find the geographical map of the book confusing; research is drawn from several countries across four continents. This offers a global perspective on specific issues, but again, a reader looking for a deeper analysis within any specific region will not find it.

Almost every chapter is enriched with citations from interviews with women, which gives a deeper impression about what they are experiencing, whether it is breastfeeding or donating milk for milk banks. Especially enlightening are interview samples from mothers who have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and must choose whether or not to breastfeed despite their baby's needs. Their struggles are largely framed by societal pressure and the opinions of their doctors.

Another successful part of the book is the chapter *Between 'le Corps Maternel et le Corps Erotique': Exploring Women's Experiences of Breastfeeding and Expressing in the U.K. and France* by Charlotte Faircloth, in which the author compares British and French breastfeeding traditions. The author paints a picture of a mother's daily life in these countries and explains why they breastfeed the way they do. The comparison reveals similarities and offers deep analysis into the differences of breastfeeding traditions in these two countries, including the different attention that breastfeeding can get. The feminist movement's influence on breastfeeding and how working mothers are combining work and bringing up a child is emphasised.

Another interesting topic, that of "milk relatives", is covered by two authors, Rosella Cevese and Abdullahi Osman El Tom, in two different articles. The tradition of wet nursing in Muslim countries often brings families closer. For this reason, the concept of milk banking in Western countries with large Muslim immigrant populations can be problematic, since the anonymity of a milk bank is unacceptable according to Muslim tradition.

Each article is unique, but I would like to highlight additional strong research regarding surrogacy and breastfeeding; *Breastfeeding and Bonding: Issues and Dilemmas in Surrogacy*. Health organisations are striving to encourage mothers to breastfeed, but in the case of surrogacy, it is clearly impossible. The authors of this article give examples of mothers who breastfeed babies that they have carried or who donate their milk. It also discusses different hospital policies regarding surrogate mothers feeding "their" babies.

This book would be interesting not only for academic purposes but also for any new mother who is interested in issues of breastfeeding and the experiences of mothers around the globe. This collection of research can hopefully inspire further research, as well as solutions to increasing the number of breastfeeding mothers.

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