

Chasing Rainbows: Exploring Gender Fluid Parenting Practices

Fiona Joy Green and May Friedman, eds.
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The spotlight on trans* individuals in the news and as characters in popular media has increased exponentially over the past few years. Even with this increased exposure, these individuals and stories of their experiences are often exoticized and marginalized in and by this exposure. *Chasing Rainbows: Exploring Gender Fluid Parenting Practices* edited by Fiona Joy Green and May Friedman is a welcome and indispensable volume that places families of trans* people in the center of the conversation while respecting individuals' full humanity. The reclaimed symbol of a rainbow in the title, demonstrating the wide expanse of sexual and gender identities, with the descriptor "chasing" evokes images of parents and children striving for authentic expression of their genders. By focusing on parenting (rather than gendered mothering), the editors crafted a collection that melds personal narrative with scholarly research studies and theoretical framing by and for parents who are trans* and those who are parenting trans* and genderqueer children. "Many of the contributors of this book are living and parenting in ways that are transgressive and risky, and are exploring new fractures in the gender bulwark, responding to cultural shifts about gender fluidity, gender non-conformity and gender awareness" (2). *Chasing Rainbows* offers a unique perspective that goes beyond a typical treatment of addressing individuals whose gender varies from the assignment made at birth and ventures into the largely uncharted territory of raising children with gender creative intention.

Chasing Rainbows begins with Kathy Witterick's astute observations and framing of her family's experience being in the "eye of the storm" of international publicity when she and her partner announced their decision to not disclose their baby Storm's gender. This recent, highly-publicized story is mentioned or discussed in several chapters throughout the volume as a cultural moment to which many parents and feminist scholars refer. The volume continues at a steady pace moving seamlessly between personal narratives and research studies culminating in a lovely piece co-authored by Fiona Joy Green, her partner, and their gender fluid son. This is a fitting end to a volume about gender fluidity in parenting by highlighting not only the voices of parents but a (grown) child as well.

The editors appropriately rely on a fluid movement from one chapter to the next rather than dividing the volume into sections. *Chasing Rainbows* is a valuable resource for gender scholars, both researchers and teachers, as well as parents who are contemplating a departure from standard binary-based parenting. Notably, Jane Ward includes a handy list of practical suggestions for parents of any gender children. Ward's claim that "Gender self-determination introduces children to the relational and culturally-embedded pleasures associated with gender play, without concretizing a gendered selfhood...[new terms like gender independent] recognizes that no single child has a greater innate capacity for gender creativity or fluidity than another" (47) holds tremendous revolutionary power that readers are exposed to from multiple directions throughout this book. The personal narratives include contemplative reflections on moments of actual parenting that do not devolve into navel-gazing but rather situate these moments in larger contexts that could have significant theoretical implications. Friedman and Sahagian's contributions, in particular, remind us that gender is but one part of our identities; our race, ethnicity, class, nationality, immigrant status (and so forth) interact with gender in critical ways that need to be explored overtly, and these chapters indicate exciting directions for future gender fluid theoretical work at the intersection of ethnic and critical mixed-race studies.

The five research chapters offer distinct studies focusing on various aspects of gender fluid parenting. These include how transgender men represent themselves during pregnancy and birth, media analysis of trans* stories, two chapters on gender creative children, and one on trans* parents. Each of these studies troubles the dichotomous gendered societies in which Canadian and U.S. parents locate their parenting and offer valuable perspectives through qualitative, interview, and text-based data.

Chasing Rainbows beautifully captures gender fluidity in parents and children and is a fine volume that will inform further studies and creative non-fiction by/about trans* and gender fluid parents and children. Mother studies scholars in particular should use this work as a springboard to theoretically and practically interrogate the ways that gender fluidity could, and indeed is transforming mothering and motherhood.