

The back cover of *The Truth about (M)otherhood: Choosing to be Childfree* asks “In a world full of messages about the joys of motherhood, ticking biological clocks, pronatalist ideologies and socio-cultural imperatives for women to mother, what does the alternative look like?” This collection of nine, wide-ranging, research-based essays shows us.

The introduction sets up the *raison d’être* for the book. Even as many more women the world-over are choosing to be childfree, that decision remains controversial. The book challenges the fundamental notion that femininity and fertility are intertwined, along with deepseated views of how society should be organized. The issue, it states, remains largely unexamined.

Subsequent sections tackle different aspects. The first reviews interdisciplinary literature on voluntary childlessness, considers motherhood through a sociological lens and dives into shifting definitions, like “childless” or “childfree.” Section two looks at who is childfree and why in three ways including: studies about predominantly white, middle-class, North American childfree women; an autoethnography by a childfree, Black, American woman academic; and a study about domestic servants in Ethiopia

who relinquished custody of newborns. The last section, the most intellectual and academic in tone, looks at the representation of childfree women on American television, in contemporary French novels and in the Hebrew Bible.

Though some common characteristics can be found among white, middle-class, childfree women, such as having a higher education, childfree women are a diverse group that defies generalizations. In the afterword, J.D. Wouk, while admitting that this poses challenges to creating public policies for this population, argues that childfree women still need to be recognized and catered to.

This book presents a refreshing vista, both wide and deep, on an important topic, which is still taboo. It also feels like the first step in an essential exploration, which needs to seriously diversify beyond the West. I am waiting for volume two.