



Call for Chapters

Demeter Press is seeking submissions for
an edited collection tentatively entitled:

Families of Choice

Editors: Alys Einion and Rachael Williams

Please submit 400-500 word abstracts by: December 1st, 2024

What and whom do we call 'family'? How do we define it? Can we 'choose' family? If so, how and why do we make these choices? What constitutes 'a family'? What is your experience of choosing to belong to, or indeed leave, a 'family' or kinship group? How do you define kinship, and why?

The notion of 'family' has evolved to encompass a more dynamic definition, moving beyond the entrenched norms of the Global North and the concept of the 'nuclear family' with its definition of two parents raising children, to something more fluid and more self-defined. Family and kinship can be biological, legally-defined (as through marriage, legal partnership or adoption) or socially defined according to social and cultural expectations. In this book, we wish to explore how individual agency, culture, collective intention, need, and/or social, economic and political drivers define and contribute to 'chosen families', and what these are variously defined as. We wish to explore the history, experiences and perspectives of families of choice, through personal, academic, auto/biographical, artistic, creative and hybrid contributions that are centred in the critical juncture of social and cultural inter-relations that constitute our complex world. In this, we also wish to explore migrant families, changing families, family structure, the breakdown and/or (re)forming of families, and the problematic definition of 'choice'.

The nature of mother, parent, childrearer, father or any other 'parental' or caregiving position or in families by choice forms part of our exploration. The nature of family, extended family, inter-generational familial ties and relationships and the lifespan of families, including the formation and dissolution of familial relationships, the loss of family and the social and other impact and recognition of these experiences. We wish to include therefore reflections on families of choice determined by any and all social and personal factors, including migration, social pressure, economic factors, cultural factors, queer and same sex families, trans, queer and diverse identities, and any and all choices and decision-making in forming, creating, discovering or imagining 'family', however that term may manifest itself. The emotional, spiritual and physical nature of 'the family' is also included in our endeavour, as is the concept of 'belonging' in and being outside of families.

As co-editors, both academics and midwives, we are inspired to expand our shared lexicon and ways of knowing around families of choice. Alys Einion is a published writer of fiction, the editor of an international midwifery journal, and an academic who has researched and written about queer families and has lived experience of families of choice.

Rachael Williams is a lecturer in midwifery, practising midwife and a qualified nurse who has worked in various roles in the NHS since 1997. As a staunch proponent of woman/person-led (rather than medical/midwifery-led) models, and as a mother of a six-year-old, she has interests in mothers' and parents' experiences and midwives' wellbeing and happiness.

We both subscribe to the view that understanding families of choice enhances the capacity of professionals and society overall to expand its vision of whatever we define as 'family.'

We are seeking submissions from anyone with something to share on this topic, including (but not limited to): academics, artists, activists, writers, mothers/fathers, parents, grandparents, anyone with kinship ties (however defined) and those with lived experience of belonging or non-belonging to families. Submissions might include: personal essay/reflection, academic essay, academic research, memoir, creative non-fiction, narrative, poetry, art, photography, and hybrid genre (ie any combination of the above).

We are interested in the experience of being within and without families, and the effects of family belonging or exclusion, as well as what brings about the definition or adoption of a family of choice, and are particularly keen to include those whose cultures and histories have been marginalised or affected by colonialism and coloniality. We also welcome new readings of definitions of families, kinship and choice through and with texts and artefacts around families, 'the family' in art, literature, politics, sociology and social policy, health, public services and public policy, anthropology, human rights, religion, faith and belief, spirituality and spiritual practice, philosophy, and culture. We would also be interested in your readings of the history of the family through a decolonising lens, through a lens of those working in the care and support of families, and through a lens of diverse gender and sexuality.

Submission guidelines

Submission Guidelines: Abstract (400-500 words) with a 75-word bio (single document) by December 1st, 2024. Acceptance will be made by 14 December 2024. Completed works (up to 6,500 words double-spaced pages, 12-point font, in MLA reference format for citation, or a maximum of eight pages of images) are due March 31st, 2025. Please note that acceptance will depend on the strength and fit of the final piece. Also please note that papers will be received and reviewed in English. Prospective authors and artists who may have limited experience with publishing in English are strongly encouraged to seek the assistance of a technical editor before submitting proposals and papers, as language difficulties may be raised as a concern during the external review process. Please send inquiries and abstracts to: alyswelshwitch@gmail.com