This edited volume brings together research from a range of developed countries —covering West, South, Northern, and Eastern Europe, as well as the U.S. and New Zealand—that share a common grounding in post-modern theory. It is divided into three sections, with the first oriented to theoretical concerns and the second and third showcasing research on intergenerational relations and social exclusion, respectively. The contributions are not a unified group, but rather a sampling of original research that varies in quality and could benefit from closer editing. An interested reader will pick and choose which chapters are of interest rather than read the volume cover to cover.

The first section reviews work on the conceptualization of youth in a post-modern context in which individuals must increasingly manage risks that were managed by social institutions in the past. The chapters examine how this changes individual biographies. Leccardi argues that the future orientation which organized industrial biographies has been replaced by "presentification," leading to more episodic and fragmented life courses. Morch and Andersen argue that whereas in the past, social institutions made youth into individuals and adults, in late modernity, youth choose which social institutions they want to participate in, making individualization a continual reflexive process rather than a linear one. Biggart and Walther classify youth transition regimes, building on Esping Andersen's welfare regimes, to attempt to understand variation in the destandardization of the life course across countries.

The second section focuses on intergenerational relations, which may go a long way to help us understand why youth are delaying entry into adult roles and responsibilities. However, the research from a variety of countries mostly suggests that parents of adult children in large part attempt to facilitate their children's aims and ambitions. These chapters generally ignore the internal dynamics of the family as an inhibitor of the transition to adulthood. This mostly rosy picture of floundering youth and their forebearing parents ignores conflict between generations that may occur not just at the level of the family, but at the societal level. Du Bois-Reymon and te Poel's contribution serves as the best example of an investigation that attempts to link the concepts of biographical orientation with empirically observed family formation and childcare decisions.

The last section on youth and social exclusion illustrates the limits of the choice biography orientation. Two chapters on Eastern Europe and Georgia illustrate how social institutions continue to influence the transition to adulthood, particularly in the case of widespread poverty and youth unemployment. In these circumstances, social structures limit individual agency and override the individualization of the transition to adulthood. This conflict between structure and agency is also evident in the chapter by Ruspini on teenage and young single Italian mothers. Youth with multiple disadvantages and transgender youth also provide interesting case studies of how biographies are constructed for specific, socially excluded groups. In these instances, individual choice is less influential than structure, given that social institutions exclude these groups.

The volume will be best received by advanced scholars in youth studies. They will find insightful theoretical reviews of conceptual problems in defining youth and the process of biographical construction in late modernity. Chapters in the second and third sections offer unique approaches to connecting theory with empirical research. These provide useful fodder for scholars engaged in the project of understanding sources of change in the life course of youth. The editors aim to understand "the active negotiation process which young people today enact . . . to restore order to the complexity of their existence" (p. 4). The volume achieves this to varying degrees in individual chapters, but falls short of developing a coherent framework for doing so.

Storytelling Sociology: Narrative as Social Inquiry, edited by **Ronald J. Berger** and **Richard Quinney.** Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004. 307 pp. $23.50 paper. ISBN: 1588262715.

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While assembling his massive collage narrative *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin wrote a small essay, "The Storyteller," lamenting the disappearance of this figure

from the modern world. Seventy years later, it's the same thesis that drives Berger and Quinney's edited volume. The story had been pushed to the margins of the sociological enterprise by the "mathematization" of the discipline. Now there is a revival. Unlike Benjamin, the editors don't ground their thesis in a materialist explanation but in the soupy terrain of postmodernism. Benjamin wrote about the evisceration of experience, the solitary self, and the dominance of mechanical medias. The editors take a softer approach. It's about voice and the need to express the self. Here, the editors stay strategically away from Christopher Lasch, Richard Sennett, or Foucault who could provide an alternative explanation for the story's revival. Tellingly, what is meant by a storytelling sociology overlaps with the narcissistic style of autoethnography popularized by Carolyn Ellis. The volume is divided into four sections: Family and Place, The Body, Education and War, and the Passing of Time, all introduced by a short preface contextualizing the essays. The standout essays are by Ronald Berger, Norman Denzin, William Brown, and Richard Quinney. What is striking are the visible networks of friendship ties and the proximity of death hovering in the pages. I can think of no stronger argument for the kind of humanistic sociology the editors advocate. Death and friendship are the two great themes of this gentle book.

If there is a central theme that passes through the disparate essays in the book, it revolves around the primacy of the "I," its narrative function in moving ethnographic stories from the rich personal dimension to the now sterile sociological world as an indicator of a new subjectivity, and as a critique of the worldview embedded in the voice and style of dominant sociological writing. These themes flow largely beneath the surface of the stories. What the essays do clearly argue as a group is that the autoethnographic story restores what has been lost in sociology—the story and the person.

When Benjamin wrote "The Storyteller," he was very much an exile on the run. But what is unacknowledged in the essays is that each of the authors is likewise scurrying for institutional cover. There is the tiniest recognition of this in the introduction where the editors hint at reprisals for this kind of work. None of the contributors are currently housed in Research 1 Universities with the notable exception of Denzin, who made his career prior to experimenting in narrative forms. Nearly half of the authors are not practicing sociologists. Fourteen of the twenty authors represented are from Midwestern schools. Once the regional dominance of the Midwest is recognized in the contributors' biographies, institutional histories, and in the citation network undergirding the volume, a case for what Deleuze and Guattarri called a minor literature could be made against the dominance of mainstream sociology anchored in the metropoles. But both large and small scale theory are left inactivated in this volume. Theory is abandoned.

Backing Benjamin's thesis was a powerful library. Benjamin doesn't even appear in the volume's bibliography. Instead, the volume tends to rely on the distillation of major works by Midwestern sociologists. Postmodernism is invoked, but the deep library of theorists and writers encoded within that periodization are largely absent. Foucault barely surfaces. Derrida is buried. The '80s classic, *Writing Culture,* makes an appearance, but the equivalent to the library that powered up that book just doesn't materialize, nor do classical theorists to any significant degree. Completely absent are authors working in more theoretical narratives. The editors note this and argue that the essays in the volume are modeled on the personal essay. Rather than personal, the essays are institutional confessions dominated by ideological concerns. Stories appear as engines for working out the good, the bad, and the ugly. There are few mysteries in this world of institutional clarity.

Mills is the archangel of this project. But there is very little history other than the situation of an ideological landscape. Time unfolds, but the complicated meshworks Mills points to aren't there. Even the biographical is vanishing from most of the essays. Where there is an "I" that however problematized on the surface, is perfect ideologically. Simply inserting an "I" is not the equivalent of producing a biography. Consequently, in the section on "The Body," there is not a single concrete description of a body. The "I" is the deep set screw in the volume that turns without any discernible haunting after effects or critical advancement. A possible explanation for this may be the settings of the essays. All

but three are tied to the academy in some significant way. Not even everyday life is represented, but the tentacles of the corporate university reaching into the person. By the end of the book, even the biographies of the contributors are disappearing, reduced to a third person inventory of position and place. This provides a decisive clue to what the "I" is. It is not a person, but an extension of the institutional setting into a personalized space, what Weber might have described as a hard shell inscribed with a corporate identity. If the word "I" was taken out, the essays would still move, so dominant is the institutional presence.

Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women are Choosing Parenthood without Marriage and Creating the New American Family, by **Rosanna Hertz.** New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006. 273 pp. $26.00 cloth. ISBN: 0195179900.

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Here is a book equipped to rouse Daniel Patrick Moynihan from his casket. Rising rates of unwed motherhood among African-American women signaled their economic and racial marginality when Moynihan provocatively labeled them a "tangle of pathology" in 1965. However, by the time Vice-Presidential Nominee Dan Quayle railed against Murphy Brown during the 1992 electoral season, single motherhood had become a respectable family option for mainstream, white, middle-class women. *Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice* is a sympathetic, qualitative study of the pioneer generation of Murphy Brown's real-life sisters.

Between 1995 and 2004, Hertz and a research assistant conducted in-depth interviews with 65 Boston area members of the post-feminist generation of middle-class women who consciously, if inadvertently, emulated Murphy Brown. They represent the first cohort of women who were no longer willing to forego motherhood when their romantic careers proved less successful securing parenting partners than their occupational endeavors had been in supplying the material means to middle-class maternity. The sample includes economically self-sufficient heterosexual women and lesbians who were at least twenty years old when they first became mothers. Most are white, but a substantial proportion formed trans-racial families through adoption. Hertz provides a sensitive analysis of how conventional family aspirations led these "reluctant revolutionaries" to craft unconventional families and kinship.

Choosing the unscripted career of conscious single motherhood compels women to confront a host of further choices. Hertz's subjects had to decide whether to pursue maternity through adoption, donor insemination, or by chancing pregnancy, and each of these choices unleashed another set of decisions: open adoptions or closed, domestic or foreign; fresh or frozen sperm, known or anonymous donors, arranged through informal networks or commercial providers; or attempting conception with informed or unwitting sexual partners. Women likewise negotiated a wide variety of kinship statuses for donors, lovers, birth mothers, and assorted others.

Hertz constructs a four-tab typology of her samples' romantic and parenting statuses, a device that effectively deconstructs the false homogeneity of the social categories of singleness and single motherhood. Some single mothers have lovers, some have co-parents, but these are not the same persons and do not arrive in the conventional sequence. Only the "consummate mother," the first of Hertz's four somewhat awkwardly termed categories, is both a single woman and a solo parent. Women in the other three categories have romantic partners with whom they do not parent and/or various kinds of parenting partners with whom they are not romantically involved. Moreover, singleness and solo parenthood are fluid rather than fixed statuses because women's relationships with lovers and co-parents evolve over time.

The book presents a thoughtful feminist analysis of how a shadowy "patriarchal puppeteer" continues to haunt the family lives of middle-class women who traded the feminine mystique for a feminist one. Entering adulthood with rising expectations for intimacy and careers, they sought to combine meaningful, remunerative employment with egalitarian, intimate, romantic, and co-parenting relationships, but failed to find eligible men (or women) who met these standards.