it, and it provided fuel for some of the best discussions of the semester. It is my hope that this book will also find a readership among U.S. policy makers who are embarking on immigration reform. Indeed, *Divided by Borders* demands that its readers grapple with the human and family impacts of immigration policy and global inequality, a task that is too often lost on political leaders who seemingly think most often in terms of dollars and political opportunity.


Hideki Nakazato
*Konan University*

Ekaterina Hertog’s *Tough Choices: Bearing an Illegitimate Child in Japan* is a thoughtfully structured, clearly stated book that offers insights to scholars and policy makers who are interested in family formation in Japan, its low rate of illegitimate births, and its lowest-low fertility. The main research question of this book is very clear, as it is repeatedly stated: Why is it so hard for Japanese women to choose to become unwed mothers? The question arises from the fact that an exceptionally small proportion (2% of all births) in Japan are out of wedlock, which Hertog highlights using comparative data in Japan and selected Western countries in her introduction (chap. 1).

Hertog carried out her fieldwork in 11 months, conducting 66 in-depth, semistructured interviews with single unwed mothers and two unmarried women, both of whom were pregnant and expected to become unwed mothers. The interviewees were carefully selected to achieve diversity in terms of income, types of employment, family backgrounds, and geographical distribution. She also carried out interviews with two small comparison groups: divorcees and unmarried women with no children.

Drawing on her own intensive interviews and secondary quantitative sources, Hertog examines whether different types of theories adequately address the main research question. According to these theories, leading factors that affect changes in family formation include women’s greater economic power, the increasing generosity of state welfare provision, changing social attitudes, and social contagion. Hertog shows that the first three factors work in Japan in the same direction, if to a smaller extent, as they do in Western countries: the improvement of women’s labor market situation, the improvement of welfare provision for single unwed mothers and their treatment in the legal system, and the decrease in the stigmatization and shame associated with unwed motherhood. The increasing number of divorced mothers corroborates this change. Thus, these theories failed to explain the persistently small number of illegitimate
births. Contagion theory can partly explain the disparity between divorced mothers and unwed mothers, but cannot explain how it began. After demonstrating the inadequacy of existing theories, Hertog provides an answer, drawing on her intensive interviews. The most important reason for avoiding childbearing out of wedlock is the guilt and fear mothers expect to have about their child’s future, not the present stigmatization of unwed mothers and children. Most unwed mothers spoke of this fear, and Hertog observes that Japanese women tend to hold a particularly strong belief that illegitimacy may have a seriously detrimental effect on their children.

Why can divorcées avoid this guilt? Hertog answers this question by explaining the difference in the extent of control women have in each situation. This is partly due to the easy availability of abortion in Japan and generous attitudes toward it. Becoming an unwed mother is likely to be seen as the result of a woman’s choice not to have an abortion, whereas becoming a single-parent family because of a divorce is not a mother’s fault “because they did not have an option of ‘undoing’ their children, comparable to abortion” (p. 148). Hertog also explains this disparity by noting that divorcées may think about their marriage and parental roles more realistically than unwed women, who based their perceptions on the ideal.

By focusing on the very few unwed mothers who thought that children could flourish without a father, Hertog shows how they successfully avoided this fear. They were either feminists who had extensive social networks or women who grew up in single-parent families themselves. Here she observes the power of the two-parent family ideal that only personal experience to the contrary could overcome. Thus, she predicts that births out of wedlock will increase in the future because increasing numbers of women are growing up in single-parent families.

The greatest strength of this book is the way Hertog presents the main research question. By comparing the proportion of divorced and unwed mothers in Japan to that of other countries, Hertog successfully illustrates the outstanding feature of Japanese family formation pattern: the rarity of unwed mothers. This contrast is persuasively used throughout the course of her discussion.

Another striking point in this book is that Hertog, a researcher from outside Japan, was able to conduct exceptionally successful interviews in terms of the number and depth. Furthermore, the sampling strategy deserves mention. Given the main research question of this book—what reasons might exist for avoiding illegitimate births—it might appear to be invalid to select unwed mothers as interviewees, since they have not avoided having an illegitimate child. In this case, however, this strategy was successful. It is difficult to find women who have had an abortion or who get married and give birth after an unwed pregnancy (especially the former) and it is reasonable to assume that unwed mothers draw from the same general cultural understandings when making decisions about
parenthood as women who have avoided unwed motherhood through abortion or later marriage. Although most Japanese mothers avoid out-of-wedlock birth in the sense that they are married when they have a child, it is likely that few women find themselves in the critical situation where they have to make the “tough choice.” By interviewing unwed mothers instead, Hertog shows what made their decision to be an unwed mother so difficult. It is also noteworthy that the interviewees told the author about very sensitive matters such as contraceptive use, their relationship with the child’s father, and his reaction to the pregnancy. Her success in designing the selection of interviewees is an inspiration for other scholars doing qualitative research into sensitive subjects.

This study of the persistence of the rarity of illegitimacy would have been more robust had it been complemented by research on couples in shotgun marriages, since it may have neglected unmarried and pregnant women in a good relationship with the father of their expected child. However, Tough Choices can be recommended for, among other things, providing a rare and graphic description of Japanese women’s decisions on marriage and birth.


Gabe Ignatow
*University of North Texas*

Based on Lyn C. MacGregor’s dissertation at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, *Habits of the Heartland* is an ethnographic study of Viroqua, a small town of approximately 4,000 residents in southwestern Wisconsin. MacGregor’s two years living in Viroqua was time well spent: she collected a great deal of ethnographic and interview data, and her arguments regarding the town’s social divisions are generally convincing and well supported as a result. MacGregor comes across as a trustworthy guide to Viroqua, and the book is well written and genuinely edifying.

*Habits of the Heartland’s* guiding argument is that Viroqua contained three main groups who lived in “parallel societies” (p. 26)—Regulars, Main Streeters, and Alternatives—and that members of each group had systematically different ideas and assumptions about what it means to be part of a community. The Regulars were generally the town’s working- and lower-middle class residents, almost all of whom had lived in Viroqua for several generations. For Regulars, community was something “natural” and spontaneous that required little conscious direction or effort, and they were suspicious of the motives of Viroquans who organized elaborate and time-consuming community projects. Main Streeters were members of the town’s civic elite. They were generally wealthier and more highly edu-