

## Foreword

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*Randrana, a Journal of Anglophone Studies* is an open access peer-reviewed annual journal. It supports multidisciplinary explorations of the English language and Anglophone literatures and cultures. *Randrana* publishes papers in English, French and Malagasy concerned with an array of issues in the Anglophone arts and humanities. Papers from young scholars and/ or those which adopt a comparative approach are particularly encouraged.

For its inaugural issue, *Randrana, a Journal of Anglophone Studies* focuses on the theme “Family Dynamics in a Changing Context”.

Across cultures and histories, family is arguably the most enduring institution in the world. Families have tended to be understood as the foundation stone of communities. Conceptualizations of family normally focus on the relationship between a parent and a child, a traditional family structure consisting of a husband, wife, and children. However, contemporary family structures around the world are characterized by a growing diversity. They may include spouses or partners with heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual or non-binary gender identities; and with or without children. ‘Modern’ families can also encompass a single parent, extended, or blended structures. Family members may or may not be biologically related. In short, notions of family are increasingly complex, and must be understood within numerous interdependent layers, including each individual family member, dyadic relationships, broader family functioning, and according to the culture in which they live (Rasbash, Jenkins, O'Connor, Tackett, & Reiss, 2011).

With the development of technology, changing cultural norms, new priorities, and new forms of communication, the relevance of the family has been increasingly questioned. Not every new development in family dynamics may be viewed as positive, nor has every social change had a negative influence on the family. Family life may be seen to have improved for many around the world. (For example, in terms of living conditions for children, women, standards in health care, and in education.) At the same time, family units continue to face serious threats due to numerous external and internal factors.

No matter how much the definition of family has evolved and how endangered it may be nowadays, its importance as a concept surely remains. Contemporary researchers find that people believe families matter more than ever. Family cohesion, ‘the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another’ (Giddens), can promote key elements contributing to wider social cohesion, etc. Contributing to contemporary debates on the family is thus essential in order to come to grips with the way it is constructed and represented in different contexts—as well as with the challenges and opportunities surrounding the idea of family.

This issue showcases six contributions which offer multiple insights into family dynamics in a changing context. The first paper is a study of the reconceptualization of the family in two movies, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969) and *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003). Through a feminist standpoint, Zoly Rakotoniera and Brina Faranirina explore the construction of the family articulated in the movies. The authors put emphasis on the rejection of normative models and adoption of other forms of relationships which reveal that family can better assure its social reproduction function when it is not centered on imposed structures such as marriage. The two authors also highlight the centrality of chosen sets of relationships as sources of empowerment and fulfillment for human beings.

The second article features Sydonie Onisoamino’s analysis of family dynamics through a literary perspective. She finds that Malagasy fictions are porous identifiers of intersectional inequalities and iniquities in evolving post-independence Malagasy family dynamics. Furthermore, ambivalent positioning between female and male writers on gendered themes like marriage, childbirth and parenting are obvious signs of post-colonial interferences in these creative writings. The author also highlights the representation of redefined values of family sphere typical of the period.

Continuing this discussion of family dynamics in a changing context through a literary approach, Gladys Abdoul examines the distorted values that are gnawing at the core of the Malagasy family in David Jaomanoro’s play *La Retraite* (1990). In her nuanced analysis, Abdoul demonstrates that the play is a sharp socio-economic, political and cultural critique of a corrupt society through the combination of a dynamic set of characters, a surreal plot and a peculiar narrative presence designed to produce tragi-comic effect.

The next paper, written by Jane Freedman, Mina Rakotoarindrasata and Jean de Dieu Randrianasolorivo, focuses on the influences of the family, particularly parents, on young people's sexual behaviors as well as sexual and reproductive health in Madagascar. Within a public health framework, the study demonstrates that the role of parents in providing sexuality education to their children, in addition to school curricula, is crucial to overcoming the challenges of youth sexual and reproductive health in Madagascar.

In the fifth paper by Haingo Slack and Vero Andriambeloso, we remain with the Malagasy people but expand the discussion to encompass the diaspora. The authors build our understanding of how family dynamics differ from that of home and how challenging it is for the Malagasy to live overseas. Such challenges are traced through family chores distribution, languages spoken and adjustment problems. Slack and Andriambeloso argue that awareness of the host country's family dynamics, its gender politics, and cultural norms are essential coping measures for better adjustment.

The final contribution shifts the focus to Zimbabwe and Michigan and provides a discussion of family models through a review of the novel *We Need New Names* (2013) by NoViolet Bulawayo. Faniry Ranaivo Rahamefy demonstrates that the two family models represented in the novel, the intentional family or chosen kin and the extended family fulfill, to a varying degree and each in its own way, similar functions: protection and survival, support, as well as identity and belonging.

All these fascinating papers point to the importance of family in global society and culture. The broad sweep of authors and cultural products examined in this issue remind the reader of the powerfully crucial role of family in the development of human beings. Changes in context however, such as those entailed by migration or other socio-political and economic factors may cause disruption within family dynamics. Yet, as most of the papers show, whatever the context, family remains basic and essential building blocks of societies. This is probably the most important message that one should remember, particularly in the current Covid-19 context.