

“Gottlieb and DeLoache’s first edition of *A World of Babies* earned the right to be called a classic of anthropology. Although one might expect the second volume of *A World of Babies* to be a simple update of the same studies, Gottlieb and DeLoache have instead done the unexpected – they present an entirely new volume with seven new studies of parenting practices. Taken together, these books set the example of how anthropology, when done well, can open minds to the possibility that there is more than one way to do just about anything, including parenting. I can think of no better way to become a more thoughtful, insightful, and therefore better parent than reading both editions of *A World of Babies*.”

Meredith F. Small  
Cornell University, author of *Our Babies, Ourselves*

“I cannot effuse enough about the second, fully revised edition of *A World of Babies*! The first edition has been a mainstay in my classroom for over a decade, and I have frequently given it as a gift to new parents. The creative, innovative, quasi-fictional design of both editions – ‘imagined childcare guides’ authored by ethnographers studying in a broad range of cultures, writing as if they are imparting knowledge to new parents as a childcare expert, such as a grandmother, midwife, or diviner – makes *A World of Babies* an enjoyable and impactful read for students and new parents alike. At a time when it may seem like there is no ‘right’ way to raise a child . . . it is refreshing to read a book which concludes that, in fact, there are *many* ‘right’ ways to raise children.”

Christa Craven  
College of Wooster, author of *Pushing for Midwives: Homebirth Mothers and the Reproductive Rights Movement*

“This is a fantastic book! I am going to use it right away with both my large undergraduate class and advanced graduate seminar . . . It [has] an impressive array of authors, each with deep knowledge of the culture for which they are preparing their ‘advice.’”

Patricia Greenfield  
UCLA, author of *Mind and Media: The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers*

“A *World of Babies* provides terrific and vivid personal examples reminding us of the importance of family, culture, history and context in children’s lives in today’s globalizing world.”

Thomas S. Weisner

UCLA, co-author of *Higher Ground: New Hope for the Working Poor and Their Children*

“This very accessible yet soundly scholarly book reads like a novel describing the same event from different perspectives, thereby shedding light on the socio-culturally constructed nature of what we might think of as ‘objective’ and self-evident ‘truths’ about early child development. A ‘must read’ for students and researchers in the area of developmental psychology as well as a ‘great read’ for anyone interested in the world of babies.”

Alexandra M. Freund

University of Zurich, co-editor of *The Handbook of Life-Span Development: Social and Emotional Development*

“Starting with a most captivating and comprehensive overview of the worldwide challenges facing 21st century parenting, alongside their seven, fictitious, ‘composite person’ *community* authors, who could (if real persons) appropriately dispense ‘how to’ infant care advice, yet, again, Professors Gottlieb and DeLoache manage to spin their baby-care magic for both students and professionals alike . . . the seven new (and one updated) chapters provide, as did the first edition, a sparkling set of ‘manuals’ but with an even greater degree of wit, clarity, and intimate cultural knowledge, spreading cross-cultural insights that at times shock, amuse, and entertain, but always shed further light on the diverse . . . ways both biology and culture find expression in how we care for our babies.”

James J. McKenna

University of Notre Dame, author of *Sleeping with Your Baby*

“Clever, refreshing, indeed witty way to engage readers . . . not only in the study of children, childhoods and socialization, but also in the conduct of ethnographic field research and the ways in which we present our work.”

Myra Bluebond-Langner

University College London, author of *The Private Worlds of Dying Children*

“The editors, in the second edition of *World of Babies*, have made a great book out of a very good one. The work is unique in combining perspectives not normally found in a single case study . . . we learn much about the enormous diversity in cultural practices vis-à-vis babies and about the contemporary forces that provoke change and resistance to change.”

David F. Lancy

Utah State University, author of *The Anthropology of Childhood*

“This lively, well-written book is authoritative, but not in the usual way. It’s not going to tell you how to give birth or raise your child. Instead, it will tell you many ways to do it, each blending a deep cultural tradition with the modern world. It’s the perfect antidote to the worst parenting myth: *There is one right way, and if I don’t find it my child will suffer*. Treat yourself instead to *A World of Babies*, and encounter a wide world of ways.”

Melvin Konner

Emory University, author of *The Evolution of Childhood*

“They had me at page 1: Encountering a few of the differences in beliefs held around the world about raising babies made me eagerly read for more. Students of child development at all levels of education need this book to help them gain perspective on their own culture’s childrearing practices. Practices that appear ‘natural’ and unquestionable are in fact deeply rooted in physical, cultural and economic realities . . . The book is brilliant. I can see this book generating extensive discussion and provoking endless consideration of the role of nature and nurture in child development.”

Roberta Michnick Golinkoff

University of Delaware, author of *How Babies Talk*

“This thoughtful and engaging book should be read not only by anthropologists and psychologists but by all expectant mothers. It makes American childrearing seem distinctly exotic. At the same time, it shows how much all mothers share. The effect is both liberating and moving.”

Tanya Luhmann

Stanford University, author of *When God Talks Back*

**PRAISE FOR THE FIRST EDITION:**

“If you ever find yourself assuming that there’s just one right way – your way – to bring up babies, read this book. It’s highly enjoyable and such a good idea that I only wish I’d thought of it myself.”

Penelope Leach  
author of *Your Baby & Child, From Birth to Age Five*

“Every American parent should reflect on these cultural essays.”

Jerome Kagan  
*Harvard University, author of The Nature of the Child*

“Having a baby is a life-enhancing and mind-extending trip into new lands, much like the marvelous anthropology of child rearing in this book. Take its expedition and it may help clarify the values and contexts of your own parenting, and bring the world’s children into the clearer focus of our knowledge and concern.”

Catherine Lutz  
Brown University, author of *Schooled: Ordinary, Extraordinary Teaching in an Age of Change*

“Read these pages. This is a very moving book[,] and a revealing one.”

Jerome Bruner  
New York University, author of *Child’s Talk*

“Judy DeLoache and Alma Gottlieb’s book is just delightful. What a treat to read about the early child rearing practices in the seven cultures around the world. The universals and the individual differences are just wonderful. This book should be a treat for all parents everywhere.”

T. Berry Brazelton  
Harvard University, author of *Touchpoints: Birth to Three*

“Put away your volumes of Dr. Spock and enter a world where there is no final wisdom about what is best for baby; only as many variations on the theme as there are ways of imagining what it means to create a new human life.”

Ruth Behar  
University of Michigan, author of *Translated Woman*

## A World of Babies

### Imagined Childcare Guides for Eight Societies

*Fully Revised Second Edition*

Should babies sleep alone in cribs, or in bed with parents? Is talking to babies useful, or a waste of time? *A World of Babies* provides different answers to these and countless other child-rearing questions, precisely because diverse communities around the world hold drastically different beliefs about parenting. While celebrating that diversity, the book also explores the challenges that poverty, globalization, and violence pose for parents. Fully updated for the twenty-first century, this edition features a new introduction and eight new or revised case studies that directly address contemporary parenting challenges, from China and Peru to Israel and the West Bank. Written as imagined advice manuals to parents, the creative format of this book brings alive a rich body of knowledge that highlights many models of baby-rearing – each shaped by deeply held values and widely varying cultural contexts. Parenthood may never again seem a matter of “common sense.”

**Alma Gottlieb** is Professor Emerita of Anthropology and Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She conducted long-term fieldwork in Beng communities (1979–93) and now connects with young Beng people through social media. A full-length ethnography of Beng childrearing practices appeared as *The Afterlife Is Where We Come From: The Culture of Infancy in West Africa*; she has also written a *Beng–English Dictionary* (with M. Lynne Murphy) and *Under the Kapok Tree: Identity and Difference in Beng Thought*. With proceeds from two memoirs of their lives with the Beng (*Parallel Worlds* and *Braided Worlds*), Gottlieb and fiction writer Philip Graham have co-founded the Beng Community Fund, a non-governmental organization that funds development projects in Beng villages.

**Judy S. DeLoache** is the Kenan Professor of Psychology Emerita at the University of Virginia. She has published extensively on cognitive development in infants and young children. She has served as President of the Developmental Division of the American Psychological Association, and as President of the Cognitive Development Society. Dr. DeLoache's research was funded by a Scientific MERIT Award from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. She is a Fellow of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2013, Dr. DeLoache received the William James Award for Lifetime Distinguished Contributions to Psychological Science from the American Psychological Society, as well as the Distinguished Research Contributions Award from the Society for Research on Child Development.

# A World of Babies

## Imagined Childcare Guides for Eight Societies

*Fully Revised and Updated Second Edition*

*Edited by*

**Alma Gottlieb**

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

*and*

**Judy S. DeLoache**

*University of Virginia*



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107137295](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107137295)

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First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Gottlieb, Alma, editor. | DeLoache, Judy S., editor.

Title: A world of babies : imagined childcare guides for eight societies / edited by Alma Gottlieb, Judy S. DeLoache.

Description: Fully revised second edition. | Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016014777 | ISBN 9781107137295 (Hardback) | ISBN 9781316502570 (Paperback)

Subjects: | MESH: Child Rearing—ethnology | Socialization | Social Values | Cross-Cultural Comparison

Classification: LCC GN482 | NLM WS 105.5.C3 | DDC 649/.1—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016014777>

ISBN 978-1-107-13729-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-316-50257-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.



*We dedicate this book to the grandbabies of our worlds –  
Dean and Mona Graham,  
and Waverly Aimone and Wilder Lewis Clore*

## Contents

*Note to the Reader*, xiii

1

**Raising a World of Babies: Parenting in the Twenty-first  
Century \* 1**

Alma Gottlieb and Judy S. DeLoache

2

**Never Forget Where You're From: Raising Guinean Muslim  
Babies in Portugal \* 33**

Michelle C. Johnson

3

**From Cultural Revolution to Childcare Revolution:  
Conflicting Advice on Childrearing in  
Contemporary China \* 71**

Erin Raffety

## Contents

4

**A Baby to Tie You to Place: Childrearing Advice from a  
 Palestinian Mother Living under Occupation \* 93**

Bree Akesson

5

**Childrearing in the New Country: Advice for Immigrant  
 Mothers in Israel \* 123**

Deborah Golden

6

**Luring Your Child into this Life of Troubled Times: A Beng  
 Path for Infant Care in Post-Civil War Côte d'Ivoire \* 153**

Alma Gottlieb

7

**From Mogadishu to Minneapolis: Raising Somali Children in  
 an Age of Displacement \* 191**

Sirad Shirdon

8

**Quechua or Spanish? Farm or School? New Paths for Andean  
 Children in Post-Civil War Peru \* 225**

Kate Feinberg Robins

9

**“Equal Children Play Best”: Raising Independent Children in  
 a Nordic Welfare State \* 261**

Mariah G. Schug

*About the Contributors, 293*

*Authors' Acknowledgments, 299*

*Citations and Sources Cited, 305*

*Index, 353*

## Note to the Reader

Before you read any of the chapters in this book other than the first one, it is important to understand two things about them.

First, each chapter is written in the style of a childcare manual from one of eight societies around the world. The “author” described in each chapter’s “About the Author” section is semi-fictional; such a created persona (based, however, on individuals or composites of individuals from these societies) permits the creation of a “manual” in the style of famous authors of childrearing books such as those by Dr. Benjamin Spock, Berry Brazelton, Penelope Leach, and others. We hope this format provides information about infant care practices in different societies in a lively and memorable way.

Second, the chapters are solidly based on ethnographic field research conducted in the societies they discuss. You will learn what anthropologists and other scholars have written about what people in these communities believe about the nature of babies, and how best to care for them.

The book is thus a mix of scholarly research and literary narrative – quasi-fictional “authors” presenting factual information.