The traditional image of the family as a life-long unit is fading fast. There are fewer marriages, more divorces, and ever more children born to unmarried or single parents. The forms of our private life are changing rapidly, and people are embarking on new lifestyles based on cohabitation, separation and same-sex partnerships. In this lively and accessible new book, Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim looks at the future of our lives after the family. Examining the breakdown of the conventional family unit, she explores the new choices that are open to individuals, and analyses our anxiety over the ensuing loss of stability.

In Reinventing the Family, Beck-Gernsheim describes how men and women are being confronted with competing and often incompatible demands. Our areas of personal choice have been redrawn, but in a space that involves new social regulations and controls. The talk of ‘family values’ sits uneasily with the reality of long working-hours, business trips, weekend seminars and career moves. At work, we are encouraged to pursue competition, speed and change; at home we are expected to find community and conciliation. Beck-Gernsheim examines the impact of these conflicting expectations on the relationships between men, women and children, and searches for possible solutions.

Reinventing the Family is an important and timely contribution to the growing debate about the family and its future. It will be ideal reading for students of sociology and gender studies, but will also appeal to a wide general readership.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim is Professor of Sociology at the University of Erlangen.

FEATURES

• Considers the future of the family in contemporary society

• Investigates the growing tension between demands at work and at home

• Examines the breakdown of the conventional family unit

• Explores new choices open to individuals and the anxiety over the ensuing loss of stability

• A lively and accessible book on a very topical theme

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