Why do some children have dreams about one-time relatives they never met? How come that in our dreams we happen to stroll through places we have never visited before? In the book, the reader will discover a new frame of interpretation for questions like these.

After analyzing hundreds of interviews, which have been at the heart of my research on families for decades, and a thorough review of international family research over the last fifty years, which has changed our understanding of the family as a basic unit of parents and children, a new theory has taken shape in my mind. I called it the *extended symbolic family*. From the multiple experiences of different social realities, from told or untold stories that swirl in the memory of extended families, patterns emerge that seem to impact all key decisions made by family members. The innumerable family patterns then help or hinder adaptation to changes in social space and time, and, conversely, change them as well. Based on the concepts of hybridity, time, and space, the theory combines several approaches, ranging from transgenerational to transnational families, into a single conceptual framework that may help social scientists and interested readers understand how the extended symbolic family creates continuity, stability, and flexibility in an ever-changing world.

In addition to plenty of extracts from interviews, the book ends with a complete story narrated by four members of the same family: a grandfather, two of his daughters, and his grandson.