

Having said that, Pepper does offer a thoughtful and practical guide to the experience of conception and pregnancy. Her writing is clear, concise, and honest. In this way, Pepper's guide stands in contrast to the kind of hyperbole usually reserved for soon-to-be or new mothers—including both the unerringly rose-coloured accounts of pregnancy and motherhood that make us feel like we must be doing something wrong and the dire warnings that make us wonder why we would want to have children at all—and the overwhelming focus on the fetus's health and development which can obscure the mother's need for insight into her own rich and challenging experience.

Of particular note is chapter five, which offers “ten tips to keep you sane” while trying to conceive, and chapter six, which tries to address the question “why am I not pregnant yet?” While there are the stories we cling to (and later resent) about the friend who got pregnant on her first try, for most women pregnancy rarely comes that easily. A book that openly discusses this issue and offers some wonderfully simple coping strategies is rarer still. As Pepper herself writes, “I lived in gay mecca, San Francisco, when I was trying to conceive, and I'm a pretty well-connected person. But I still felt as though I was reinventing the wheel every menstrual cycle.” Pepper is honest without being confessional and her company would have made my own journey toward parenthood much less strange and lonely.

The last half of Pepper's book addresses the experiences of pregnancy and birth. In these chapters, Pepper speaks directly to the mother's experience of her changing body and needs. This is what makes Pepper's the ultimate guide to pregnancy for lesbians: her ability to speak frankly to other lesbian moms, not as an expert or medical professional concerned primarily with “the baby,” but as a peer. This is a book that reduces the stress of pregnancy, keeps you company on the journey toward parenthood, and reminds you that your biggest challenges are shared by others.

Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851-1950

Julie Berebitsky.

Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000.

Reviewed by Amy Cuomo

The history of adoption in the United States is an expansive topic that might have daunted a less able historian; however, Julie Berebitsky tightly focuses

her historical lens and offers a carefully wrought picture of the changing ideology that surrounded adoption in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The author summarizes her book's purpose as follows: "Rather than providing a historical survey of adoption practices, this work examines adoption for what it can tell us about Americans' changing understanding of the family." Berebitsky does, however, provide an excellent overview of adoption practices. The author's historical research is meticulous, ranging across records from orphanages, social workers' case files, and correspondence from prospective parents, as well as those relinquishing a child for adoption. Problems of closed records required the author to search for additional material to help her understand the meaning of adoption; as a result Berebitsky also considers material found in popular magazines of the day.

Berebitsky analyzes the United States's changing perspective on adopted children, adoptive parents, and what these changes reveal about cultural understandings of family. Chapter one explores the foundations of early adoption laws and takes the reader through the early history of American adoption, using specific case studies of orphanages such as the Washington City Orphan Asylum and the Board of Children's Guardians. Photographs of adoption contracts and orphanages are included and offer a historical backdrop to adoption in the nineteenth century. In addition to developing a legal analysis of early adoption procedures in the U.S., the author considers eugenic concerns regarding "tainted blood." Berebitsky further notes that while many parents legally adopted their children, others chose to raise children without adopting them because they were daunted not only by the legal quagmire attached to adoption but also by its cost. Thus, the author explores cultural attitudes that questioned the ability of the law to constitute a family. Chapter two looks specifically at an adoption campaign launched by *The Delineator*, a popular magazine, and reveals how the campaign managed an early media spin that constructed a narrative aimed at "rescuing" children through adoption. Berebitsky's exploration of *The Delineator* campaign shows how the media affected the public perception of adoption.

In her third chapter, Berebitsky studies the cultural stigma of childlessness in the first half of the twentieth century and the growing concept of what constituted a "real mother." The author notes the contradiction that women who adopted children, while often denied the "status" of biological mothers, could be considered "superior citizens." Chapter four depicts the growing prejudice against single mothers who wished to adopt and notes that this change of attitude became pervasive by the 1940s. The author summarizes her research succinctly: "Single women still adopted after 1920; however, there was no longer popular support for their motherhood. And by the 1950s, it appears that virtually no single women adopted." Chapter five looks at the dispute between public adoption agencies that employed social workers and philanthropic women who worked with private adoption agencies to find homes for children. Berebitsky's study reveals that "[t]hroughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the demand for children greatly exceeded the supply of adoptable

infants.” This demand for infants also spurred social workers to expand the parameters of their notion of “adoptable infants.”

The epilogue notes current debates surrounding the institution of adoption. Berebitsky cites the fear of racial genocide expressed by the National Association of Black Social workers who tried to prevent whites from adopting black children. The author also recognizes the effect of *Roe v. Wade* on adoption, as there are now fewer available children to be adopted.

Like Our Very Own is clear, accessible, and painstakingly researched. It will appeal to readers interested in the history of the family and adoption.

The Family Context of Parenting in Children’s Adaptation to Elementary School

P. A. Cowen, C. A. Cowen, J. C. Ablow, V. K. Johnson, J. R. Measelle, eds.
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005.

Reviewed by Irene A. Barrett

The importance of understanding children’s education from a holistic standpoint is a recognized topic within educational training and research. Children’s experiences both in and out of the classroom are now considered in relation to their academic success. *The Family Context of Parenting in Children’s Adaptation to Elementary School* is an in-depth study exploring the significance of family experiences on a child’s transition to elementary school.

This book examines seven themes within the family context: authoritative parenting; marital quality in relation to sex-typed parenting; children’s self-perceptions; parental conflict; intergenerational context of parenting; parental work experience; and family process/structure. As a longitudinal study, the researchers were able to use multiple data gathering methods; thus, not only were the seven themes explored over time, the researchers witnessed gradual changes within the family contexts. The researchers also include voices of parents, children, teachers, and research observers who offer their points of view throughout the study.

I was troubled by the researchers’ noted population bias. For the purposes of this work, they recruited two-income, heterosexual, married couples whose first child was entering kindergarten during the time of study. Eighty-four percent of participants were Caucasian and 79% were equal to or above the median family income for the research region. The researchers targeted a population that was not “high-risk” and where the child’s experiences of school transition were at par with normal child development.

Given the sample population, the researchers’ findings come as no surprise