

respect displayed by the co-parents for each other. Failure of the shared parenting experience is most often cited as a result of financial considerations, however. This occurs when the couple abandons their practice of shared parenting, particularly when one parent (often the male) is able to earn more money as the sole breadwinner than if both parents work part-time. In addition, Ehrensaft found that men in shared parenting households are more likely to entertain fantasies about adopting the traditional model of parenting. Ehrensaft discovered that since a woman's desire for shared parenting appears to be the prime impetus in adopting this parenting style, failure of co-parenting often results in divorce.

Interestingly, even in households where shared parenting is successful, gender inequalities between the behaviours of mothers and fathers are apparent. A core difference between men and women's approaches to parenting is the issue of engagement. The mothering self of a woman is intermingled with all of her parts. This contrasts with fathers for whom parenting is something "to be done." As a result, men who seek to balance work, parenting, and time for themselves tend to be more successful than women, since it is easier for them to *do* all three compared to women who attempt to *be* all three. Hence, guilty feelings associated with separation from a child are far more common among women than men. When a woman leaves her child, she leaves behind an integral part of herself. When a man leaves his child he simply stops what he is doing—the loss of the child's presence does not pose a threat to his core being.

Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy

Michel, Sonya.
New Haven: Yale University Press 1999.

Reviewed by Merryl Hammond

Although dense and dry, *Children's Interests/Mother's Rights* is a meticulous, historical account of the child care system (or rather the lack thereof) in the United States, from its roots in the colonial era, through the early nineteenth century, the Victorian era, the Depression and World War II years, through to the present. Author Sonya Michel poses a central question: Why has the United States failed to develop a comprehensive system of public day care, when all the other democratic, market societies (Sweden, France, Japan, Australia, and Canada are mentioned briefly) have done so?

Readers learn about various child care options that working mothers in the United States have used over the centuries: "baby farms," boarding institutions

for “half-orphans,” poor houses, “little mothers” (i.e. the use of young girls as child-minders), day nurseries, infant schools, crèches, kindergartens, children’s shelters, and homes for infants. Michel is scrupulous in linking developments in the childcare arena to forces at work in the larger society, such as industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and war. She places each child care-related “development” or innovation within a specific historical and ideological context.

Sonya Michel is a history professor and director of women’s studies at the University of Illinois. Scholars will appreciate her rigorous research, attention to detail, 84 pages of endnotes, and detailed index—all of which weighs heavily in this publication’s favour. However, this is one of the most poorly designed books I have read in some time. Both type and margins are too small, sub-headings too few, and most of the illustrations and photographs are too small to be of any use—all of which detracted severely from my enjoyment of the book.

Constructing Lived Experiences: *Representations of Black Mothers in Child Sexual Abuse Discourses*

Bernard, Claudia.
Burlington: Ashgate, 2001.

Reviewed by Sara Collings

Claudia Bernard’s research into black women’s experiences of mothering children who have been sexually abused is an important addition to feminist literature which explores the blame and responsibility that is placed on non-offending mothers of sexually abused children. To date, the particular dilemmas that black mothers face in such a crisis have received little attention.

Bernard’s qualitative interviews draw on the experience of thirty black mothers who self-identified as black British of African Caribbean origin whose children were either abused by a family member or by an adult who was known to the family. These women spoke about their coping strategies and their experiences with seeking help. Bernard’s interviews suggest that these mothers faced particular stresses as they cared for their children, stresses that arose as they attempted to mother in a racist society. Bernard is particularly concerned with understanding how “divisions constructed around race and social class create a very different set of circumstances within which [black mothers] respond to the abuse of their children” (1).