

autobiography and theory, is most welcome and, because it raises questions for further consideration, such as feminism's own essentializing tendencies, Keniston's essay is a suitable finale to a comprehensive volume.

## **The New Midwifery *Reflections on Renaissance and Regulation***

Farah M. Shroff, ed.  
Toronto: Women's Press, 1997

### **Reviewed by Jan E. Thomas**

For generations, Canadian midwives have assisted women during pregnancy and birth; only recently, however, have they done so with state recognition. The essays included in *The New Midwifery: Reflections on Renaissance and Regulation* discuss the process of legislating midwives in Canada and the implications of state regulation for midwives and mothers.

The first section of the book introduces issues of diversity and debate. One key concern is the newly created divisions between midwives. Cecilia Benoit's essay on professionalizing midwifery suggests that legislation has created three key points of contention within the midwifery community: midwifery training, regulation of practice, and organization of work. While midwives gained much by becoming autonomous professionals, they have also had to compromise some of the freedoms that went along with being independent of the health care system. Several essays draw attention to these issues and concerns.

The essays in the first section demonstrate how regulations do not affect all groups equally. Pat Israel's essay on mothers with disabilities provides a succinct and practical summary of specific issues that affect this group of women. An essay by an Aboriginal midwife illustrates the unique blending of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of birth and healing that is part of her culture. Other essays explore how legislation might impact immigrant women and midwives from the global South countries who live with the legacy of colonization, racism, and oppression.

The second section focuses on state regulation in six provinces with legislation in place by 1997. While essays concentrate on specific provinces, many common themes emerge. First, the importance of state support for midwifery (including funding) is made very clear. State support confers legitimacy on the profession and provides midwives with a place in the mainstream medical system. The celebration of state recognition, however, is tempered with concerns about the limitations of regulations. Many of these issues are raised in the first section and further illuminated by the case studies in the second section.

The issues of race, class, and gender are also woven throughout the book. At the time of legislation most midwives who were authorized to practice were white and middle class (like those most involved in crafting the legislation). Several essays discuss the need to incorporate more women of colour, Aboriginal women, and culturally relevant care to make midwifery services truly accessible to all.

Finally, the importance of women's voices is interlaced throughout the essays. In some cases, they are the voices of midwives who share the unique needs of women in their communities. More subtly, the collective voices of Canadian women who want their birth choices to be respected are heard, including the voices of women politicians, social scientists, and health workers who help contribute to this story of creating a model of midwifery care in Canada.

The strengths of this book are its inclusion of these diverse voices and its mix of practical, theoretical, and academic essays. *The New Midwifery* is appropriate for birth activists, midwives, and those interested in the broader context of midwifery care. It will be particularly useful for those grappling with the legalization of midwives in their own communities. The book provides important insights, lessons, and potential models. Regrettably, it was written soon after regulation went into effect and the long-term successes and failures of legislation are still unknown. Those stories remain for others to tell.

## **How to Avoid the Mommy Trap A Roadmap for Sharing Parenting and Making It Work**

Julie Shields  
Sterling, VA: Capital Books, 2003

### **Reviewed by Diana L. Gustafson**

*How to Avoid the Mommy Trap* is hailed as “the essential guide for women who want to balance motherhood and life.” Clearly written, cleverly packaged, and humorous at times, lawyer and mother Julie Shields offers a roadmap to shared parenting that includes practical strategies for recognizing and avoiding the mommy trap. According to Shields, a woman is stuck in the “mommy trap” when she takes on a disproportionately greater share of parenting and household responsibilities with a disproportionately lesser share of leisure and personal time than her husband, and when she objects to this situation, believes it is unchangeable, and makes no plan for “getting unstuck” (14).