

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).

The book draws on formal and informal interviews with 80 mostly suburban American couples aged 30 to 40 years in their first or second marriage. Most participants are educated—from high school to graduate school—and are well established in their careers. Based on her data, Shields classified couples as *traditional* (nurturer mothers and breadwinner fathers); *egalitarian* (parenting is shared); or *transitional* (a contentious middle ground where beliefs and values about parenting collide). Strategies for success are supplemented with professional resources and interviews with a range of family and child-care experts. Support for statistical claims and practical suggestions are drawn from sources as diverse as a 2001 Harlequin Romance e-survey about what women want, to studies by noted University of California at Berkeley sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild.

The book maps a staged plan for shared parenting, from courtship through to marriage, pregnancy, and new motherhood. Three composite case studies illustrate a variety of hazardous detours and productive routes: some as obvious as discussing the division of parenting responsibilities before baby arrives, and other more creative ways for women and their partners to negotiate positive change. Packaged for both the serious parenting journeyer and the casual tourist, there are Cosmo-type road signs (how to spot his gender ideology; a mommy trap diagnosis), a two-page resource of books and websites to visit, and a chapter on national parenting and child-care legislation of particular interest to American readers.

Unfortunately, this Dr. Phil-like self-help guide assumes that women are individually and collectively responsible for “getting stuck.” According to Shields, the most important reason why “women collectively have not negotiated good deals for themselves . . . is *low aspiration level* [emphasis in original]” (51). Women are described as ineffective complainers who “gripe,” “whine,” and are “unable to stop grouching” (10) because of their “failure to understand the wide range of options available to modern parents” (15). With disturbing regularity, these damning descriptors are juxtaposed with assertions about women’s collusion with, and unquestioning acceptance of, gender stereotypes in the media and social and economic inequalities in the workplace and the home. According to Shields, a woman chooses between getting stuck or unstuck in the mommy trap.

Feminists and other critical theorists agree that “choices spring from power, and those who have limited power have fewer choices” (Giroux 305). The uncomplicated, socially decontextualized understanding of women’s choices advanced in this book is deceptively attractive because it is skillfully packaged to appeal to women whose justifiable “complaint” is inequality in parenting and household responsibilities. This roadmap may be useful for readers with a critical lens to separate the individual from the systemic, and the social and economic power to choose among flex-time, part-time work with reduced income, and full-time nannies. For women with fewer choices, however, this roadmap may reinforce the negative and persistent message that

getting stuck or failing to get unstuck is a mother's choice and a woman's personal failure.

Reference

Giroux, H. A. 1997. "Rewriting the Discourse of Racial Identity: Towards a Pedagogy and Politics of Whiteness." *Harvard Educational Review* 67 (2): 285-320.

Abortion and Nation *The Politics of Reproduction in Contemporary Ireland*

Lisa Smyth
Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005

Reviewed by Máire Leane

Abortion and Nation analyzes the ways in which abortion politics have been framed and reframed in Ireland over the past two decades. The discussions of abortion contained in three key daily newspapers, in parliamentary debates, and in the two governmental working-groups established on the topic provide the data sources on which Smyth's analysis is based. She argues convincingly that a hegemonic construction of Irish nationhood as essentially familial, Catholic, traditional, and heterosexual has shaped the nature of abortion debate in Ireland and has mitigated against the introduction of a right to reproductive choice.

In chapters four and five, Smyth demonstrates how during the successful 1983 campaign to introduce a constitutional ban on abortion, abortion was framed as a moral/religious issue with the anti-abortion stance constructed as representative of the traditional Catholic, familial ethos of the Irish nation. Within this frame, concerns for women's rights were marginalized while the rights of the foetus were strongly asserted.

As Smyth's analysis in chapters six and seven reveals, however, the 1992 "X case," and the outpouring of rage and compassion it generated, forced a reappraisal of this anti-abortion stance. "X," a fourteen-year-old girl pregnant as a result of rape, was prohibited by the Irish courts from travelling to England to procure an abortion. A subsequent Supreme Court decision permitted "X" to leave the country on the grounds that she was suicidal and that there was a substantial risk to her life. Smyth argues that following the "X case" press coverage of the abortion issue constructed the State as repressive. Furthermore,