

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

to this reviewer. It was found, for example, that mothers who had control over their work schedule and autonomy in their position had children who were considered more academically competent by their kindergarten teachers. The researchers further found that “regardless of the number of hours fathers work outside the home, their psychological investment in their work may have potential benefits for their children’s development and their life as a family” (248).

I question the value of these findings for many North American families. First, these results are aligned with the social belief that a mother’s first priority is her family. Second, this “ideal” scenario only seems possible for families that are financially secure. Finally, and most importantly, these findings reinforce traditional gender roles, where the father’s main contribution is his ability to provide for the family and the mother’s is to be accessible to her children for nurturance.

Especially useful are the four recommendations presented in the “integration” section of the text. First, the researchers confirm that it is possible to identify children at risk for academic and social problems. Second, they enumerate important opportunities for preventative intervention with families around the transition to elementary school. Third, they argue that study of low-income populations is needed. Finally, they recommend increased family-based interventions. Although there is preventative support in place for families who are “high risk,” little to no research has been conducted to determine its efficacy. Moreover, these supports are not readily available to the general public. The researchers argue for the need to understand the already implemented supports so that they can be extended to all families.

This work encourages further quantitative research in the field. As a scholarly work, however, it will not appeal to practitioners or the general public.

Losing a Life: A Daughter’s Memoir of Caregiving

Nancy Gerber.

Lanham, Maryland: Hamilton Books, 2005.

Reviewed by Gail M. Lindsay

Nancy Gerber says *Losing a Life* is the story of her father’s stroke and the intervening six years prior to his death in 2001. I would argue that it is equally the story of a father and daughter, of a daughter’s struggle to grow up, and of one family’s experience of the American health care system. In fact, there seem to be many lives lost.

As an academic, Gerber turns her family experience into a book that