

additional chapters. One chapter focuses on drugs, medications, and environmental hazards, and a second chapter considers cesarean birth and vaginal birth after a previous cesarean (VBAC). The new edition reflects an awareness of the changing times and attempts to avoid gendered assumptions concerning partners, coaches, infants, and caregivers. Detailed yet easy to understand, the guide is a useful reference for pregnant women.

However, despite the progressive tone which the authors use in the preface, the book reinforces rather than challenges traditional notions of motherhood. In doing so, it approaches pregnancy, childbirth, and caring for an infant narrowly and does not recognize motherhood as multifaceted.

For example, despite the fact that a wide range of emotions can and do accompany the experience of motherhood, the authors limit their discussion solely to “positive” emotions. They describe birth as a joyous event and regard the expectant mother as anticipating the “long-awaited joy of having the baby” (32). However, they fail to recognize that fulfillment can also be accompanied by anger, jealousy, and resentment. Imagine, for example, a woman who lacks the financial means to support the child she is carrying or does not want the child. Or think about a woman whose colicky newborn has kept her awake every night for the past week. What might their emotions be regarding their experiences?

Failing to articulate a broad range of mothering experiences can have serious consequences. Such failure impacts the private lives of women and demands that they adhere to narrow definitions of acceptable mothering. Mothers who fail to do so risk being labeled bad mothers, a label which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and carries social as well as legal sanctions. Since pregnancy and childbirth guides occupy a central place in contemporary discourse about motherhood, it is imperative that authors and consumers of these guides continue to problematize narrow assumptions about motherhood. Only then can we begin to move beyond idealization and toward an understanding of motherhood in its full complexity.

A World of Babies: Imagined Childcare Guides for Seven Societies

Judy DeLoache and Alma Gottlieb
Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000

Reviewed by Petra Büskens

The title of Judy DeLoache and Alma Gottlieb's *A World of Babies: Imagined Childcare Guides for Seven Societies* is somewhat perplexing. Imagined Childcare

Guides? What on earth are they? Amidst an array of fascinating anthropological research, we discover that they are “truthful fictions” or realistic accounts of childrearing conveyed through an imaginary protagonist. This is a clever book. It takes the format of the childcare guide of the later twentieth century and uses it, albeit fictively to develop a series of guides for ‘other’ societies: the Puritans of seventeenth century Massachusetts; the Beng of Ivory Coast (West Africa); the Balinese of Indonesia; Muslim villagers in Turkey; the Walpiri (an Aboriginal group) of Northern Australia; the Fulani of West and Central Africa; and the Ifaluk people of Micronesia.

A World of Babies uses a popular convention, the modern self-help book, to address a little known or understood subject: the childrearing practices of cultures other than our own. However, as the authors point out in their introduction, the expert led guide is itself a product (possibly a fiction?) of advanced, industrialised nations which, through processes of social change, have lost touch with their “traditions.” It is, therefore, the western audience to whom they direct their guides (with more than a little irony). This innovative style crosses traditional boundaries between truth and fiction, utilising primary anthropological research conveyed through the fictional voice of a culturally appropriate “expert” who might be a mother, grandmother, healer, or diviner. We are led into complex societies and belief systems through the eyes of a wise insider and tutored in the ways of birthing, feeding, healing, and educating children. We learn of “appropriate” sexual, social, and religious arrangements surrounding child-rearing practices and we marvel at the disparate interpretations of “right,” “proper,” and “natural.”

We learn, for example, of the importance of twice-daily enemas for Beng infants who are carried all day and cannot afford to soil their carrier’s clothes; why the Balinese insist their infants breastfeed with their heads upright (they are little Gods whom we must revere); and why both Ifaluk and Beng mothers observe a year-long post-partum sexual taboo or else risk infant death at the hands of angry gods. In effect, we learn how apparently “superstitious” beliefs or taboos often function to preserve the health and well-being of mothers and babies in much the same way as modern science does.

This is good scholarship for it neither rails against nor romanticises “exotic” cultures. Instead, we are invited to learn of a completely *different* way, or rather seven different ways, of rearing children. Of course, this throws into relief our taken-for-granted assumptions of what is right or good. As the authors write:

every group thinks that its way of caring for infants is the obvious, correct, natural way - a simple matter of common sense. However, as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz has pointed out, what we easily call “common sense” is anything but common. Indeed what people accept as common sense in one society may be considered odd, exotic, or even barbaric in another. (5)

The reader is taken on an intriguing path into some very particular styles of childrearing. The great achievement of this book is that through its rich ethnographic detail we are able to understand apparently “strange” practices in their own contexts, by taking into account climate, belief system, family structure, economy, religion, history, etc. We are thus invited to make the strange familiar, and in doing so, our own familiar practices are rendered just that little bit strange.

Bestfeeding: Getting Breastfeeding Right For You An Illustrated Guide

Mary Renfrew, Chloe Fisher, and Suzanne Arms
Celestial Arts Publishing Company, 1996

Reviewed by Marybeth White

Breastfeeding evokes many scenarios, from the romantized image of a newborn nuzzled against the skin, nursing contentedly by a crisp fire to the agony of cracked and bleeding nipples, and an unsatisfied babe. Frequently a woman’s perception will be shaped by the breastfeeding environment she has (or has not) been exposed to. Three women have collaborated in writing *Bestfeeding: Getting Breastfeeding Right for You*. The authors bring a vast amount of experience to their project, which includes stories from families they have worked with. Their combined knowledge spans three countries and diverse perspectives on breastfeeding.

The book is divided into sections:

- Why Women Want to Breastfeed
- How to Breastfeed
- Problems: Their Causes and Solutions.

The book explores the impact of cultural perceptions on the relative success of breastfeeding. The emphasis throughout the volume is on the nursing relationship between mother and baby. The authors convey the uniqueness of each nursing pair. They advocate the validity of a mother’s feelings and underscore the critical importance of support for each breastfeeding relationship. There is a section on special concerns such as HIV, inverted nipples, and premature babies.

Most inspiring are the case studies which give life to the physical process of breastfeeding by providing a window onto families of newborns willing to share their personal experiences. The authors have compiled an index of resources including “Where to Find Help” (an international listing), “Groups that Assist Parents of Babies with Special Needs,” “Breastpump Suppliers,” “Books You Might Find Helpful,” and an “Index of Commonly Asked