

as the culture of motherhood enables women to articulate otherwise silenced stories, it also engages in a silencing process of its own, marginalizing and devaluing mothering stories that deviate from assumed ideals. Troublingly, this struggle exists within the mother herself, who, according to Nelson, *needs* the affirmation of the culture of motherhood—that space that “gives language, meaning, and affirmation to what would otherwise be unarticulated or inaccurately represented mothering experiences” (106)—even as she resists allying herself with that space.

By examining the culture of motherhood, *In the Other Room* offers beneficial insights into the complexities and contradictions of maternal identity. However, I also found myself wanting more. I would have liked to read a more nuanced examination of the relationships between the “culture of motherhood” and the “mothers’ club,” terms that Nelson uses interchangeably, but which would appear, from the interview excerpts included in the text, to have very different meanings. There were also some curious omissions. In particular, I was surprised to find no reference at all to the December 2000 Canadian parental leave legislation which guarantees a minimum of 35 weeks of paid parental benefits through the Employment Insurance system. While this legislation is undeniably fraught with problems, it has nevertheless opened up the possibility of transforming the “other room”—not only by bringing mothering into the public eye, but also by offering the potential to broaden the membership base of the culture of motherhood to more formally recognize fathers as well as mothers. Given the anecdotal impact of this legislation (as witnessed through the Vancouver Public Library’s *Man in the Moon* program for fathers and their young children, for example), it seems curious that Nelson’s work makes no mention of it at all.

Survival Notes for New Parents: An Inspiration for an Amazing Journey

Robert Stofel.

Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009.

Reviewed by Sarai (“Sadie”) Harris Conway

Survival Notes for New Parents is one of the latest entries into the vast market of books for parents of newborns. The book is organized into 100 entries, each of which includes a few paragraphs on parenting, an inspirational quotation, and a bible verse. Each item is self-contained within a pair of opposing pages. Because of its format, the book does not require sequential reading.

Each of the brief sections defines a scenario and provides suggestions for managing the particular situation. The guide tackles a variety of topics, from

the seemingly minor (such as “Why Every Parent Should Take a Power Nap” and “Picky Eaters”) to the relatively significant (including “Should You Work or Stay at Home?” and “The Pain of Divorce”). While the initial entries are specific to bringing home a new baby, the remaining entries are indiscriminately organized.

Though the book jacket claims “*Survival Notes* does not preach,” the author also never admits to facing a situation for which the appropriate solution was not easy to come by, institute, or enforce. In this way, the book seems to present an idealized notion of parenthood to a population—new parents—that could stand to be reassured that there is no single best way to parent.

The author’s writing style is conversational and the book reads like a compilation of friendly advice. In one section, readers are told that newborns “usually resemble cone heads”; on another page, readers are encouraged to “discipline the best you know how.” The author, a father of two, seems to be positioning himself as a sympathetic resource on parenting rather than an expert practitioner in child development.

The book’s incorporation of biblical verses and the author’s background as a pastor contribute to the work’s overtly Christian focus. Many of the suggested courses of action seem to promote a particular moral perspective.

Stress-Free Pregnancy Guide: A Doctor Tells You What to Really Expect

Carol Livoti and Elizabeth Topp.
New York: Amacom, 2009.

Reviewed by Roshanda D. Cade

In *Stress-Free Pregnancy Guide*, mother-daughter team Carol Livoti and Elizabeth Topp strive to lessen the anxiety associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Although Livoti and Topp collaborate on the book, Livoti’s is the authorial voice. With over 30 years experience in obstetrics, Livoti’s medical opinions permeate the pages of the book. For women who regard pregnancy and childbirth as medical experiences, this book may lessen stress. Women who do not believe in medical intervention, however, may find this book increases stress.

During pregnancy, particularly a first pregnancy, so many things seem abnormal. By presenting a range of normal occurrences, Livoti and Topp put readers at ease. They divide each trimester into a “normal” and “abnormal” chapter. While these terms may be unsettling, the division proves an effective strategy. Once women read a “normal” chapter and see themselves reflected in the examples provided, they may opt to bypass an “abnormal”