

## BOOK REVIEWS

and the global politicization of infant feeding practices. I accept that this may be an unfair critique given Barston's disciplinary background and her intended audience. That said, Barston's book provides those of us committed to feminist scholarship on mothering some theoretical paths to explore.

## Have Milk, Will Travel: Adventures in Breastfeeding

Rachel Epp Buller, ed.  
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013.

## REVIEWED BY MELANIE FRASER

*Have Milk Will Travel* "reveals the lighter side of nursing ... the laugh-out-loud turbulence of life as the one-stop milk shop." As this is the intention of the book, it's not surprising that the stories in it center on squirting milk, embarrassing men, and the difficulties of establishing breastfeeding.

It's a short collection of reflections by Americans. All the contributors are mothers but their brief biographies do not illuminate their racial or gender identities. First person narrative provides a voice for women to tell their own stories in their own words. However, it doesn't necessarily move into political commentary or feminism. There is a foreword by two lactation consultants and it would have been good to have heard insights from experts about the breastfeeding challenges that form the crux of several of the stories. The stories in the book, described in retrospect, do not necessarily explain much about breastfeeding or link to wider sociological discourse.

The front cover art is a linoleum block print by the editor, who is a feminist art historian. The picture is a breastfeeding child. I love seeing toddlers nurse, but the latch looks really uncomfortable. Nipple pulling can hurt! One of the reasons given for breastfeeding difficulties is that new mums don't know what nursing looks like—and thus disseminating information about good breastfeeding positioning and attachment is promoted by some maternalist organisations. But this picture looks painful to me.

As well as the front cover artwork there's a cartoon, a poem, and a photo. Overall the collection is similar to that on some blog or web sites, with a mixture of personal story and artistic self-expression.

As a UK reviewer, I didn't always understand all the abbreviations and perhaps some of the humour passed me by. Given the extensive maternity leave in the UK, many British mothers don't pump breastmilk at work and our culture around breastfeeding is slightly different from the U.S. I often have to do some translation though: not all U.S. situations map onto UK mothers.

At the end of her account “Basketball and breastfeeding” Mandy Cohen comments “Final tally on this trip: Times walked in on—two; Security issues—one; Awkward moments—nine; Blushes induced—12. Not too bad. And lucky me, I get to do it all again next week. Bring it on!” This is the crux of what the book is about: she has to travel because she works in TV covering an Americanised sport. She has babies but isn’t at home with them. The humour is the reaction she provokes from male peers. Is she proud or embarrassed by pumping breastmilk? Like most mums, it seems that she wants to be congratulated, and commiserated with, at the same time. It’s good that she is able to tell her story, replete as she is with power to negotiate lactation breaks. Maybe less privileged mums will be relieved that they can compare their experiences with glamorous professionals. Some mothers will connect, and laud, her efforts to pump milk for her baby. But it makes me glad that when I was breastfeeding, I mostly stayed home.

## Understanding Family Meanings: A Reflective Text

J. Ribbens McCarthy, M. Doolittle and S. Day Sclater.

Bristol: Policy Press, in association with the Open University, 2nd ed., 2012.

REVIEWED BY VIRGINIA THORLEY

The purpose of the authors is to provide a reflective text for students of sociology, to fill a gap in teaching texts in the area of family studies. This text is divided into three parts, research; theories and concepts; and contexts; with some overlap. There is a link in the front of the book to online transcripts and audio discussions with leading authorities, including one of the authors.

At every step of the way the reader is challenged with readings and examples to re-examine preconceptions and enter a discussion of personal biases, in an exploration of what ‘meaning’ and ‘family’ mean. The readings and excerpts from transcripts are interspersed with comments by the authors.

The place of definitions, a vexed question in family studies, is explored throughout, so that an understanding of the complexities of ‘meanings’ and ‘families’ is fostered. As meanings ‘constitute the interface between culture and individuals’ (35), they are important in regard to human lives. The importance of understanding different concepts of ‘family’ and different types of families is demonstrated by discussions of situations where ‘family’ is defined for official purposes such as social security and family law. Social policy, the authors point out, seeks a model or models (31). Yet, no matter how well intentioned, this can lead to lead to generalizations and misunderstandings.