

developments. While child-care is now an important issue compared to fifteen years ago, it is still a vulnerable item politically. In many eyes it is still seen as a luxury rather than as an essential community service. The book concludes with a 10 point political manifesto of policies to be established, including adoption of a national child-care policy, commitment to universal service provision, central employment of child-care workers, and affordable child-care rather than tax deductions.

The recommendations put forward form a radical blue print for future directions but are not all totally realistic in terms of today's political climate. For example, the employment of all child-care workers by a central authority, while no doubt effecting economies of scale would require a massive shift in public's view of the role of central government. Many of the recommendations would of course cost a great deal, and the author's point to defence spending or the dependent spouse rebate as areas where funds might be obtained. Such shifts in priorities would seem unlikely in the foreseeable future.

The authors have examined child care from the basic premise that it is necessary as a precondition for equal opportunity for women and while they have also examined some background research on the benefits of child-care for children, it is all from this perspective. This is not intended as a criticism of the book, but one needs to bear this in mind, as when reading the book one could almost forget that there are authors who hold the views of Fredelle Maynard (see the first book reviewed).

Brennan and O'Donnell have provided a comprehensive work that draws together the many issues related to child-care in Australia into one handy reference.



"Give and Take In Families"
(eds) Julia Brannen and Gail Wilson
Allen & Unwin, London, 1987
\$69.95 HB \$29.95

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As a child, dear reader, this reviewer was castigated constantly by her older cousins for being prepared to read anything. They said that it did not seem to matter to her whether she read the *Women's Weekly* or the washing machine manual. She read and enjoyed everything! They were right and this state of affairs endured for years, until this book

Give and Take in Families, an edited collection of mostly English articles, derives from the feminist research tradition in terms of the book's subject matter and in its research design. It concerns itself with an important issue, the way resources travel around family members,

especially between the female and male members, and, also, between family units, especially female and male units. Furthermore, the research reported in the nine articles uses qualitative data in order to obtain a detailed picture of resource exchange. Therefore, it should be significant and exciting, but it is not.

In the introduction the editors, Julia Brannen and Gail Wilson, set up the theme and argue that each article illustrates it. Unfortunately, while some articles are central to the theme, such as "Money : Patterns of Responsibility and Irresponsibility" and "Being Poor : Perceptions and Coping Strategies of Lone Mothers", others are not.

This may not have mattered so much if the articles had been well written. Alas, the contributors are career researchers who present their work in thesis format - problem definition, followed by research design and research instruments, followed by presentation of data, then conclusions. Their writing styles are similar - dull and hard to understand, even for academic researchers.

Work covering some of the same area has been published by Melbourne's Institute of Family Studies. This work shows the desirability of inter-relating local and international knowledge and is written so that it is lively and easy to understand.

In addition, the English work touches on major issues such as the powerlessness of the poor without either knowing of, or utilising, the extensive research in this area, such as that published by the Brotherhood of St. Lawrence in Australia or the War on Poverty research published in the U.S.A.

Notwithstanding these comments, the two particular articles mentioned do show new pictures of family life, most notably women's silence as a strategy of conflict reduction and women's perception of the power of single parent poverty. It does go some way towards linking the public and the private but it does not go far enough.



"The Complete Guide to Contraception and Family Planning."

Gabor Kovacs and Ann Westmore
Hill of Content. 1986. Melbourne. \$9.95, 126 pages (paperback)

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This is an excellent Australian book on contraception and family planning. The material presented in the book is based on a series of reviews and recommendations produced by the National Medical Task Force of the Australian Federation of Family Planning Associations. The Task Force was established in 1980. A list

of reviews produced by the Task Force is contained in the appendix of the book. This is a most useful reference list on the many aspects of contraception, family planning and human sexuality.

The book provides a most comprehensive discussion on all aspects of contraception and family planning. The only omission is information on community resources and organisations in Australia providing family planning services. If this material had been included, as an appendix, I feel that the book would have fulfilled the claim made in the title: "A Complete Guide to Contraception and Family Planning".

The text very clearly explains the various methods of contraception, and provides a most valuable and sensitive discussion on family planning for all age groups. The main strength in the presentation on the use of contraception is the clear message that, not only do different couples' contraceptive needs and preferences differ, but also birth control requirements can change during the reproductive years. The reader is given all the information on which to make an informed choice regarding contraception and family planning. The text is clearly written and well illustrated. It includes all important biological and medical information. However, no previous knowledge of the subject is required as each section is well presented, without being over-simplified. A comprehensive glossary is included at the end of the book.

The chapter on "Know Your Body" gives a clear description of human male and female reproductive anatomy and physiology. It includes line drawings which are well labelled and show the sites of action of the different types of contraceptive. There is also a summary of how the various birth control methods work. This chapter leads into the main part of the book which discusses all methods of birth control.

The various methods of birth control are grouped into immediate short-acting, medium-term, and permanent methods. This classification is appropriate and fits well with the theme of the book that the type of birth control should fit the needs of the users. These needs will change depending on the type of sexual relationship and stage of reproductive life. A summary of the information on types of birth control and suitability for the users, depending on their situation, is presented in a chart at the beginning of the book.

For each contraceptive and birth control method an historical perspective is presented on the development and use of the method, followed by the mode of action and effectiveness. The advantages and disadvantages and any relevant side-effects are included, as well as a discussion on myths associated with the method and any contra-indications for use. Where relevant, the discussion is illustrated with diagrams.