REVIEW ESSAY


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Upon reading this text (originally published in 1979), it is as though you are reading about the current 21st century situation in early childhood caretaking and daycare. That is, not enough spaces and not enough qualified individuals to fill this important gap in most of our cities in North America. Alongside this, Jackson and Jackson paint a picture of the socio-economic situation surrounding the families of the children who, for need, are at the mercy of a largely unregulated non-standardized system that is charged with caring for its youngest and most vulnerable population.

The text is divided into three sections: *Part I: An Investigation; Part II: Seedtime; and Part III: Agenda for Whitehall and Westminster*. Each section is detailed in its narrative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The authors provide novice and expert researchers and academics a “notebook” that outlines the decision making process in the selection of sites to address the perennial question of how the youngest and most vulnerable members of Britain’s cities and towns are taken care of and educated.

Each section provides the reader comprehensive and well-detailed chapters investigating “childminding”; the individuals charged with the caretaking of children, their families, and the changing socio-cultural and economic scene in Britain in the 1970’s.

*Part I: An investigation* illustrates the different areas the research team chose to conduct its study. The section does not explain this, rather, the reader is pulled into the scenery of each community with the attention to detail the Jackson and Jackson’s team see and hear.
By the end of this section, the reader has a full circle understanding of the economic situation within which families and of those individuals who choose (by desire or necessity) to do “childminding” find themselves. In fact, the conclusion to this section blatantly illustrates the state of the care of children in their early years:

Under three there is little daycare provision [...]. The onus is on the mother staying at home and then of the extended family coping with her absence. [...]. Childminding is not some pocket of Victoriana presented in older inner-city streets of Britain. It is a universal and necessary consequence of the way we live now." (p. 198)

In the second section, entitled, Part II: Seedtime the authors discuss the surveys and interviews conducted and results from the childminders and families interviewed who use childminders. Highlighted are four cities: Huddersfield, Manchester, Bradford, and Nottingham. What the reader will find in this section is narratives reflective of the analysis done based on the previous section. As the authors state in this section, the goal is to create a “blueprint” for childminders that there may be not only standardization among individuals that provide this service, but also “training for childminders” that brings about the realization that what they provide are the “building blocks” for a child’s socio-cognitive development.

The third and last section, entitled, Part III: Agenda for Whitehall and Westminster provides the reader a comprehensive read on what Jackson and Jackson, and their team conclude based on their findings. They present a series of suggestions and needs that must be addressed “[... if only to a degree—(to) ease the pressures on children that we have recorded in city after city” (p. 243).

As previously stated, this text is more directed toward expert and novice researchers and academics interested in understanding and as a result, undertaking such a comprehensive study investigating early childhood care and teaching/learning. It does not provide the reader a “road map” as to how sites were selected, survey/interview questions asked. Rather, it implies these aspects via the narrative that reads quite easily and with incredible detail highlighting the “human and humane” aspect of such a sensitive issue, that of the care of the youngest and most vulnerable citizens in any community and the families that need to depend on such a resource.