

for damages even if “due care” has been exercised) and “the liability must be proven on the basis of strict causality of the defendant’s action against the plaintiff and it must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.” These seem to rule out economic outcomes in the courts since some “due care” by victims is often efficient. Also, legal action against producers of acid rain would not succeed if only because “strict causality” is not now technologically feasible.

It is not required to read the entire volume to understand the kernel of the message — free markets can play a constructive role in solving environmental problems if only governments would give them a chance. The message, complete with examples, is conveyed by Block’s excellent Introduction and his Chapter 10, which concludes the book. I also liked Chapter 7 on “chemophobia” for readable illustrations of ideas which run through the book.

Readers who have a particular interest in local environmental issues will be disappointed — examples are drawn from many countries. References to environmental law and enforcement are drawn mainly from the United States. This is too bad for Canadian readers, because our institutions for environmental management are significantly different in concept and in practical application.

A word of caution. Professional economists may share objectives with environmentalists, or not. I think that a great many do, if only because they recognize that markets in environmental assets are imperfect and incomplete. Economists will differ on practical methods to overcome these market failures. This book represents one coherent economic approach with an arguable claim to generally constructive application. It is a positive contribution to an ongoing market in dialogue and debate on economics and the environment.

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*Recollecting Our Lives: Women’s Experience of Childhood Sexual Abuse*, by the Women’s Research Centre. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1990. Pp. 272. \$14.95 paper.

This book is the result of a collaborative effort of several women and the Women’s Research Centre. Their work was aided by funds from Health and Welfare Canada and the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada. The basis of the book is a set of interviews with seventeen women

survivors of childhood sexual abuse and eight women whose children were sexually abused. These women were referred to the project by counsellors and therapists or by the Women Against Violence Against Women Rape/Crisis Centre in Vancouver. The twenty-five women were interviewed for an average of four hours each, following interview protocols. Outlines of the protocols are provided as appendices to the text.

The contents of the interviews have been excerpted and organized to form the basis of the material in this book. In addition, the authors have drawn a variety of conclusions about child sexual abuse and have employed the excerpts to reinforce their conclusions. The contents of the book have been organized to address the following issues: the childhood of the interviewees; the description and analysis of their abuse; the consequences of the abuse; recovery; and needed reforms to deal with the problems of child sexual abuse.

During the past decade we have become aware of the pervasive problem of the sexual exploitation of children. The sexual abuse of children is both pandemic and epidemic in our culture and its consequences are profound. One consequence is that many women are in need of assistance to deal with the consequences of abuse. Women are in particular need because girls are most frequently the victims of sexual abuse (and thus many women are survivors of childhood abuse) and, in the role of mother, women are the primary support for children who have been abused. The principal goal of this book is to provide a resource for such women, and in this manner the book is very successful. Adult survivors of abuse, or women who have learned that their children have been victims, will find both solace and assistance in these pages. The excerpts from the interviews provide the kind of support that only another victim can provide. The interviewees' comments are poignant and relevant to any woman facing the problems associated with child sexual abuse. Also, the organization of the text enables the reader to find material on different aspects of the abuse problem, as needed.

A second, more explicit, goal of this book is to provide information about the sexual abuse of children and, in the process, expose myths and misinformation about abuse. The book is much less successful with respect to this goal than it is with its primary goal. Early in the text the authors note that their sample is small and cannot be considered as representative of survivors of abuse or mothers of abused children. They noted that "[w]e do not presume to generalize or claim their [the interviewees'] experience is broadly representative" (18). Having said that, however, the authors proceed to draw too many broad generalizations. In the process, they

misrepresent the complexity and nature of child sexual abuse. By the middle of the book they have forgotten the limited and biased nature of their sample and they conclude that the interviews "challenge many theories and assumptions about childhood sexual abuse and how and why it happens" (81). For example, they state that "abusers are most often adult family members" (21). While most abuse is done by men who are known by their victims, they are frequently not family members (one problem here is with the definition of family). In the sample of women in this project, the majority of children had been abused by more than one offender, and the abuse happened repeatedly. Although both these features are all too common, neither is typical of the kind of abuse most children suffer. Perhaps the worst example of the over-generalizations found in this book concerns the systemic response to the reported abuse. This section of the text deals with the way in which the social service and criminal justice systems dealt with the allegations of abuse. The authors simply do not appreciate the complexity of cases of child abuse which these agencies face. The agencies are indicted as inadequate, which indeed they may be in many respects, on the basis of the reports of the handful of women interviewed in this project. There is a need to address systemic response to abuse but it must be dealt with in a comprehensive fashion, not from the limited perspective of only a few women.

This book joins the increasing ranks of texts concerned with helping those who are directly or indirectly the victims of childhood sexual abuse. As a resource for women it should prove valuable. As a resource for those who wish to understand the current state of knowledge about abuse this book fails. Its reference list is outdated, it reflects only part of the complex problems associated with child victims of sexual abuse.

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