

Killian

Failing Moms

Social Condemnation and Criminalization of Mothers

While many claim that being a mom is the most important job in the world, in reality motherhood in the United States is becoming harder. From preconception, through pregnancy, and while parenting, women are held to ever-higher standards and are finding themselves punished - both socially and criminally - for failing to live up to these norms. This book uncovers how women of all ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses have been interrogated, held against their will, and jailed for a rapidly expanding list of offenses such as falling down the stairs while pregnant or letting a child spend time alone in a park, actions that were not considered criminal a generation ago. While poor mothers and moms of color are targeted the most, all moms are in jeopardy, whether they realize it or not. Women and mothers are disproportionately held accountable compared to men and fathers who do not see their reproduction policed and almost never incur charges for "failure to protect." The gendered inequality of prosecutions reveals them to be more about controlling women than protecting children. Using a reproductive justice lens, Caitlin Killian analyzes how and why mothers are on a precipice and what must change to prevent mass penalization and instead support mothers and their children.



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