

Looking Back, Looking Forward: Mothers, Daughters, and Feminism

Guest Editorial Board: Sharon Abbey, Brenda Cranney, Jeanne Maranda, Evelyn Marrast, Ruby K. Newman, Andrea O'Reilly, Christy Taylor
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Reviewed by Julie Thacker

This special double issue of *Canadian Woman Studies* celebrates an important milestone—its twentieth anniversary—and 30 years of feminism. The issue, which includes poems and pictures, is designed to spark discussion in Women's Studies courses about women's equality, why patriarchy needs to be dismantled, and the successes of feminism.

The guest editors describe their threefold objectives for this special issue: "to expand the definition of motherhood," to celebrate the diversity of mother-daughter interactions, and "to validate the interdependence between feminism and mother-daughter empowerment" (5). I applaud the vision of the editors and the courage of the contributors whose work is gathered here under four themes: empowerment, agency, narrative, and motherline. I heartily recommend this special issue of *Canadian Woman Studies*; it offers a moving record of the vision of past and present feminists.

Sharon Abbey's article, "Mentoring My Daughter: Contradictions and Possibilities," is particularly relevant to my own situation. I and my 19 year-old daughter struggle, much like Abbey and her daughter, to honour rather than discount our own acquired knowledge. Abbey's wisdom, along with several other women's active mentoring, will help me guide and nurture my daughter through pitfalls as we adapt "to ongoing transformation; honoring the power of dependency, individuation, and embodied wisdom" (26). Abbey's prescription for reciprocal mentoring of our daughters is a new method of parenting that has the potential to challenge and dismantle the dominant patriarchal system.

The section devoted to the theme of agency examines policies and institutions that have sought to sever the mother-daughter relationship: research methodology; government control and policy formation; the media; and religion. The articles in this section urge readers to be vigilant and to resist patriarchal power structures. Ruby K. Newman's "Survival Narratives of Ethiopian Jewish Mothers and Daughters," for example, describes mothers and daughters who have fled Ethiopia for Israel. The daughters take pride in their mothers' courage in leading their families on their difficult journeys and adapting to their new culture.

In "Looking Back, Looking Forward," the final article in the issue, Ursula M. Franklin states that the massacre of 14 young women on 6 December 1989

at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal is a reminder of the chilly—and chilling—climate for all women. She calls on young women to remember and support their ageing mentors, and to remember that feminism provides “a way of life that our society . . . desperately requires and that we need to practice.” Her article provides a fitting conclusion to a well-written and finely edited issue that will inspire readers.

Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories: Acts of Love and Courage

Rachel Josefowitz Siegel, Ellen Cole, Susan Steinberg-Oren
New York: Haworth Press, 2000

Reviewed by Rivka Greenberg

All mothers are challenged daily to address multiple forces in their lives. These forces include their children, partners, families, society, religion, work, and social issues, as well as their own, individual needs. For many Jewish mothers, defining the place of Judaism as a significant value in their lives, responsively and proactively, is an enigmatic and perplexing struggle. For earlier generations, the primary sources of support for mothers were the women in their extended families: mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and cousins. Increased mobility, economic shifts, and work outside of the home have diminished the influence of the extended family and mothers have had to find new ways to meet their need for support, guidance, and community. This is particularly true within the context of Jewish community, where many Jewish mothers struggle to find a place for Judaism in their lives. Today, many Jewish women – unaffiliated, Reconstructionist, Reform, and Conservative – seek community outside of synagogues and other Jewish institutions. Moreover, Jewish women and their families are no longer living in “Jewish” sections of cities, lessening their opportunities for connecting with other Jewish women. So how can Jewish mothers find the communal support they need? *Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories* provides that much needed sense of community.

This book promotes connection among Jewish mothers throughout the world. Thirty-five chapters offer thirty-five insights from Jewish mothers worldwide who share their thoughts and experiences and, in the process, serve as role models and provide support. The six section topics – tradition; love; Jewish values; Jewish identity; spirituality and religion; and the real world – address key aspects of women’s lives. The editors have succeeded in moving beyond the stereotypes of Jewish women. The women gathered here represent