

Unfortunately, *Family Secrets* falls short of meeting the formidable task of providing an in-depth understanding of why Baker's sons, or other gay men, keep their identities as gay males secret from family, friends, and others. What is obviously missing, and most frustrating, is the Baker's analysis of her own role as a mother in contributing to, and perpetuating, the need of both her sons to keep their sexuality a secret. Throughout the narrative Baker provides glimpses of her own homophobia, appearing tolerant and as a therapist, yet feeling devastated as a parent when she discovers that Gary is gay. The continued hope that Gary is somehow not gay is central to the first half of the book and lingers throughout the text. I found her need to attribute Gary's idiosyncracies, and many of his personal choices, to his sexuality alone, a testimony to her homophobia. Human development is much more complex and complicated.

Although I recognize that Baker is strongly influenced by both the psychological theories of homosexuality of the 1970s and 1980s, and the general hatred for and ignorance about homosexuality and homosexuals during the reign of Regan and Bush in the U.S., where Baker lives and practices, I am frustrated. Surely, as a psychologist, Baker can see the necessity for an analysis of her contribution as a mother to the pain and suffering that both her sons experience due to homophobia and the secrecy about their sexuality. The fact that Andy never disclosed his homosexuality to Baker, even after witnessing her love and support for his brother through his suffering and death, attests to the continued lack of comfort, if not homophobia, I suspect he experiences in the mother/son relationship. It is not until the latter part of book, after the death of Gary, that Baker accepts the tragedy of Gary's life is his death and "the fact of his gayness" (181). This suggests homophobia and attests to the need for self-analysis by Baker. Had Baker done her homework by addressing her personal role in the "family secret" of her gay sons, I think her book would have been much more insightful.

Mother of My Mother: The Intricate Bond Between Generations

Hope Edelman
New York: The Dial Press, 1999

Reviewed by Fiona Joy Green

Mother of My Mother: The Intricate Bond Between Generations, part memoir and part reportage, comes on the heels of Hope Edelman's international bestseller *Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss* (1995). In the introduction to this

second volume, Edelman shares with the reader her journey to comprehend the centrality of the interconnection of grandmother-mother-granddaughter. Only by being attentive to the unexpected, persistently gentle interruptions of her mother in her own memories of her grandmother, is she able to recognize how “every grandmother-granddaughter relationship is connected by two mother-daughter bonds” (10). The strength of *Mother of My Mother*, I believe, comes precisely from this insight. Had Edelman not attended to the inter-generational connection along maternal lines, the book would not be as comprehensive or as rich in its exploration and analysis of the grandmother-granddaughter bond. By eloquently drawing on her own recollections, the remembrances of over seventy other granddaughters, and on research in the field of Psychology, Edelman successfully illuminates the three-generational triad from which women develop their female identities.

The book is well organized, with twenty chapters divided into four parts, taking the reader through various relationships granddaughters have with their grandmothers as the younger women mature from childhood through to motherhood. Part I, grounded in the childhood memories and experiences of Edelman and a number of other granddaughters, explains how the kind of influence grandmothers have on the development of the emerging self in granddaughters is shaped by the type of relationship the grandmother has with the mother, and whether the granddaughter’s relationship with the grandmother is primary or secondary. Part II delves into the push and pull often associated with adolescent maturation and the process of developing a sense of self that frequently draws daughters away from their mothers. Here Edelman uses the dynamics of the three-woman triangle to demonstrate the role grandmothers play in both the development of granddaughters and in supporting and caring for them as they move from girlhood to womanhood.

Part III focuses on the centrality of maternal grandmothers to many families and explores four specific archetypes of matriarchs that emerge from Edelman’s research. The Autocrat is the grandmother who rules her extended family like a tyrant, with members acting out of fear of her anger, or loss of her affection. Edelman describes her own grandmother as a Benevolent Manipulator, “whose love for her family is matched only by her desire for control” (148). A different kind of elder, who possesses a quiet, behind-the-scenes power and whose very presence elicits awe and respect, is the Gentle Giant. The final matriarchal figure described by Edelman is the Kinkeeper, who acts as the family’s social, cultural, or religious core and offers a sense of cohesion to the extended clan. Not all grandmothers fit succinctly into a singular category, as many share characteristics of two or even three archetypes. Regardless of where grandmothers fit into this schema, it is clear that the family’s power dynamics and the granddaughter’s opinion of her grandmother are closely related to the type of matriarchal power the grandmother assumes.

The final section of the book addresses the changing relationship between granddaughter and grandmother as both women mature. Granddaughters in

their 20s and 30s frequently switch places with their grandmothers, with the younger woman becoming the nurturer, care giver and confidant of the older woman. Edelman speaks eloquently of the emotional discomfort and pain that “greying” granddaughters experience as they see the health and strength of their grandmothers fail, and how a granddaughter’s grief over the death of her grandmother does not have a forum. The death of a maternal grandmother means not only the passing of an era and the realignment of the female line, it also brings the loss of a multifaceted relationship, the loss of the granddaughter role and the loss of a direct connection to one’s childhood.

Before reading this book I had not thought much about the triad of my mother, my grandmother, and myself, or of the ways in which this trinity has influenced each of our lives. Like many of the other granddaughters in the book, I too was distanced from my grandmother, and often experienced a difficult relationship with my own mother. But, unlike Edelman, I did not have the good fortune of spending time with my maternal grandmother, who lived across an ocean, and died almost 25 years ago. We only saw each other for very brief periods of time once every few years, and my lone recollection of my Granny is of my last visit with her just before she died when I was 15. Although I did not have a strong relationship with my grandmother, reading Edelman’s book has provided insight into my relationship with my own mother, and the significance of the triad I am in as a daughter and mother. I am more aware of the role of each one of us in my child’s development and sense of self.

Overall this book is beautifully written, and Edelman braids her own memories with those of other granddaughters and with psychological research, making her book a smooth and easy read. My only criticism, which is minor, comes from my position as an academic. I found Edelman’s citation of sources to be unclear. Although she provides a good bibliography, the notes at the end of the book are not obvious in the text. It is not until I reached the end of the book that I found notes corresponding to references made within the text. Having said this, I strongly recommend *Mother of My Mother* to anyone interested in her own development as a woman, daughter, and mother, and to the role she may have in the development of future generations.

The Reality of Breastfeeding: Reflections by Contemporary Women

Amy Benson Brown and Kathryn Read McPherson, editors
Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1998.

Reviewed by Bernice L. Hausman

In this volume, readers get a variety of short takes on breastfeeding in the latter