

parent and she writes about being misunderstood. Friends could not comprehend how a dynamic professional could have a strange new focus- “babbling all day and hanging around parks.” She found a support group of other mothers in which she was able to find her voice and share her concerns and joys. One of the biggest topics of discussion was about paid labour.

Johanson soon starts writing about her experiences as a parent and begins to sell her stories. She leads writing workshops and slowly moves herself back into the paid workforce. Her children then move into daycare.

Johanson’s partner, especially his sense of humor, is a constant feature of her stories, from the time of their separation to their reunion, although the status of their relationship is never made clear. Most feminists will appreciate the story of her partner’s vasectomy, as he acts on his belief that birth control is not just a woman’s concern. In fact, Johanson’s partner writes the last story in the book “Bernie Gets the Last Word.”

Canadian Families: Diversity, Conflict and Change, Second Edition

Nancy Mandell and Ann Duffy, eds.
Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company Canada, 2000

Reviewed by Lorna A. Turnbull

This collection of articles provides a thorough, critical assessment of the situation of families in Canada today. It will provide an excellent classroom resource for courses across a range of disciplines. Organized in three parts, the book traces the history of family diversity, current family situations, and future challenges faced by families in our ever-changing world.

The first part of the book, “Families in Historical and Social Context,” challenges the myth of the husband/breadwinner and wife/homemaker model of the family. Chapter One demonstrates how the traditional family is a historical anomaly of the post Second World War period and how diversity is, in fact, the norm. The authors note the significant number of single parent families that existed historically because of the impact of death and desertion. They also note the impact of classism in defining family norms, showing how, among poorer and non-white families, both husband and wife were commonly employed outside of the home. Chapter Two includes an examination of the role of the child in the parent-child relationship, recognizing that contrary to traditional theories of socialization, children have an impact upon their parents

and childrearing is, in fact, interactive. A statistical depiction of contemporary diversity among families is provided in the third chapter. The author illustrates the way many of the changes in family life have had a negative economic impact on women.

Specific diversities in contemporary Canadian families are examined in part two, "Welcoming Family Diversity". Each author shows how myths about the traditional family and prejudices against diversity have resulted in harmful experiences for many people. Lesbians and gay men have experienced significant discrimination in family formation, as illustrated in Chapter Four, and lesbian and gay youth often endure physical and verbal harassment, social isolation, and rejection by their families of origin and peers. In Chapter Five, the author illustrates how state policies founded on racism have adversely affected family formation among Aboriginal Canadians, immigrants and people of colour. The final chapter in Part Two shows the devastating consequences on families of poverty, noting that structural inequalities have widened the gap between "have" and "have not" families.

"Confronting Change" is the final part of this excellent collection. Chapter Seven offers a critical perspective on feminist inspired legal reform in the area of family law. The author despairs of the failure to conceptualize women's varied situations and the corresponding detriments that many women suffer upon the implementation of monolithic legal changes. Chapter Eight argues that single mothers are not long-term users of social assistance but rather struggle against destructive social policy to avoid long-term dependencies. The penultimate chapter explores the lack of effective policy solutions to the problem of family violence and attributes some of this difficulty to prevailing beliefs in the myth of family harmony and prosperity. The tenth chapter reviews the unique situation of aging families with an emphasis on the importance of intergenerational caregiving.

The editors conclude their opening remarks with the following thought:

Family diversity characterizes our past and present arrangements. Acknowledging diversity enables us to recognize the dynamic nature of families, interacting as they do with the ever-changing social, political, cultural and economic contexts that surround and shape daily life. Postmodern families embrace change, celebrate diversity, revel in contradiction and work to demolish violence. (14)

This is a great place from which to move forward.