

Book Reviews

Pregnancy Stories: Real Women Share the Joys, Fears, Thrills, and Anxieties of Pregnancy from Conception to Birth

Cecilia A. Cancellaro
Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2001

Reviewed by Amy Mullin

When she was pregnant, Cecilia Cancellaro read widely on the topics of pregnancy and childbirth, but she found few accounts of women's experiences of these events. This book seeks, in part, to make up for the dearth of women's stories of pregnancy. In collecting the stories of 38 pregnant women, and those of several of their partners, Cancellaro hopes to give readers a sense of the diverse ways in which women experience pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period.

The book is divided into ten chapters, each of which tells the stories of five to 12 women. The chapters are organized thematically and, along with sections devoted to each trimester of pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period, include accounts of women's experiences of prenatal diagnostic testing, pregnancy complications, and pregnancy loss. The last chapter gives partners' perspectives on pregnancy and childbirth.

All the pregnant women reside in the United States. Articulate and self-reflective, they range in age, social class, and the number of pregnancies they have experienced. Most are married, one is single, and one has a same-sex

partner. Despite some initial ambivalence, all the women want to be pregnant.

The women detail their experiences, describe the changes in their bodies and their relationships, and their emotional reactions to these changes. Because many of their stories include accounts of physical and emotional discomfort, as well as serious complications and pregnancy loss, this volume is not intended to allay anxiety. Instead, it provides a realistic sense of the bodily and emotional changes experienced by pregnant women. It also shows that there are many ways to be pregnant; that there is no one way to be a supportive partner of a pregnant woman; that the transition to motherhood, although replete with moments of joy, is complicated; and that women find ways to cope with stress, loss, and sorrow.

Pregnancy Stories will appeal to pregnant women, but the book deserves a wider audience. Those who have experienced pregnancy might find that this book gives them an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences, which are rarely made public. Those who are wondering whether or not to become pregnant, and those who seek to support a partner through pregnancy, will appreciate the realistic account provided by Cancellaro.

Before Roe: Abortion Policy in the United States

Rosemary Nossiff
Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

Reviewed by Susanna Jones

Reading Rosemary Nossiff's *Before Roe* is analogous to playing a game of chess with a strong opponent who has the tenacity and vigilance to win. In the game of chess, the player with the stronger pieces on the board may appear to be winning, but one move can radically alter the balance of power—as in the struggle that led up to the winning of abortion rights. *Before Roe* is a fabulous book that traces the intense political and religious developments leading up to the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. To make this history even more compelling, Nossiff begins by explaining the complicated and different party arrangements of New York and Pennsylvania and how abortion policy was directly linked to parties in power and interest groups that emerged. Nossiff moves beyond party and machine structures and highlights the role of competing discourses (legal, religious, medical, and moral) that heavily influenced abortion policy.

Chapter three charts the emergence of feminist groups, along with antifeminist groups, that also shaped developments in abortion law. The book is full of legal cases that trace rulings that mirror the cat and mouse game of chess. It also names and identifies key individuals in both states who were