Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering

A YORK UNIVERSITY PUBLICATION

GRANDMOTHERS AND GRANDMOTHERING

Fall/Winter 2005
Volume 7, Number 2 $18

Featuring articles by Carole Roy, Susan Loudermilk Garza and Sharon Talley, Dolana Mogadime, Rebecca Raby, Gisela Norat, Kim A. Morrison, Priscilla A. Gibson and Carolyn Cornils Scherer, Dawn L. Wright Williams, Serena Patterson,and many more...

Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering

Grandmothers and Grandmothering

Fall/Winter 2005
Volume 7, Number 2

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson, York University
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
Tel: (416) 736-2100 ext. 60366 Email: arm@yorku.ca;
Website: www.yorku.ca/crm

The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering
(ISSN 1488-0989) is published by
The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)

The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) is the first feminist organization devoted specifically to the topics of mothering and motherhood. ARM is an association of scholars, writers, activists, policy makers, educators, parents, and artists. ARM is housed at Atkinson College, York University, Toronto, Ontario. Our mandate is to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of feminist, academic, and community grassroots research, theory, and praxis on mothering and motherhood. We are committed in both membership and research to the inclusion of all mothers: First Nations, immigrant and refugee mothers, working-class mothers, lesbian mothers, mothers with disabilities, mothers of colour, and mothers of other marginalized communities. We welcome memberships to ARM and submissions to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering,* our biannual publication, from all individuals.

Membership and Subscription Information

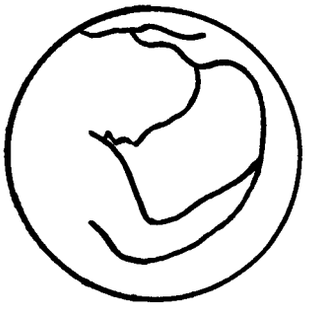
Full individual memberships are available for $85Cdn/US; institutional memberships are $120Cdn/US for 2006. A full membership includes membership to the association, a members directory, a biannual newsletter, participation on a listserve, pre-registration for annual conferences, and a subscription to the biannual *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering,* as well as regular information mailings with respect to upcoming events, lecture series, conferences, workshops, and fundraisers. Basic and student memberships are also available, as is a subscription solely to the journal. Please see the last page of this journal for detailed information and order forms.

Submission Guidelines

In order to submit articles, book reviews, or poetry to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering,* contributors must be a member of ARM. The journal will only consider material which is not under consideration at any other journal or publication. Please contact us for a list of upcoming themes as well as a copy of our style sheet. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, no longer than 3750 words (or 15 pages), and accompanied by a diskette. Art or photographs may accompany your work. ARM reserves the right to edit manuscripts for length and conformity to our editorial guidelines and house style. We will not publish writing that is sexist, homophobic, racist, or in any way discriminatory. Submissions will be blind-reviewed by a guest editorial board. Articles printed in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the staff of the journal, or of our funders.

Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering

Grandmothers and Grandmothering



Fall/Winter 2005
Volume 7, Number 2

Contents

Folio

Book Reviews

Front Cover

"Grandmother and Child." Photo: Ian Richard Barnett

Dawn L. Wright Williams

Grandma's Hands
An Open Letter to My Grandmother "Mother"

It is estimated that 52 percent of African American grandmothers in the United States who live with their grandchildren are their grandchildren's primary caregivers ("Did You Know?", 2004). Reflecting upon her life as an African American girl/woman raised by a grandmother, the author addresses an open letter to her. The writer pays homage to her grandmother while recollecting a wealth of experiences and special memories of time spent with her grandmother "mother."

> Grandma's hands
> Clapped in church on Sunday morning
> Grandma's hands
> Played the tambourine so well
> Grandma's hands
> Used to issue out a warning
> She'd say "Gladys don't you run so fast,"
> Might fall on a piece of glass,
> Might be snakes there in that grass,
> Grandma's hands... (Withers, 2001)

> The African American Grandmother has been variously described as the guardian of the generation: The preserver of extended families, the keeper and sharer of history, wisdom, and folk beliefs, the source and communicators of values and ideals and the protector of grandchildren. (Gibson, 2002: 36)

Reflecting upon my life I have composed an open letter to my grandmother. It recounts my experiences being raised as her child. While I maintained regular

contact with my mother, my grandmother, affectionately referred to as MaMa (pronounced Mah Mah), was my primary caregiver or my grandmother "mother." This recollection also includes memories of my great-grandmother, MaMa's mother, of whom I am vividly reminded by the relationship MaMa now has with my own daughters.

Dear MaMa,

As I sit here trying to write of my experiences growing up with you I often find myself moved to tears. I have so many memories, so many feelings, so many fears. I'm not quite sure where to start. I guess I will just start at the beginning.

When I think of my life with you I think of not only love but also triumph and security. Triumph because we both triumphed over many adversities together by holding on to one another. Security because, plain and simple, that's what you provided me. I often thought as a young child what would happen to me if something happened to you. Where would I go? Who would care for me? Who could ever love me as you do? I still find myself, after 36 years of living, asking myself the same questions.

We have shared so much together. My memories are full of my life with you. As a young child I don't remember much but I created these memories from all the stories you shared with me (and everyone else) of my early years on this earth. I seem to find it difficult to separate my recollections from yours: taking my first steps in your home, walking around the corner and looking up to see your smile and open arms celebrating my accomplishment; my first time reading the word "exit" to you on one of our many shopping trips in Chicago. I do remember the many nights you bathed and carried me, giggling to your bed then preparing our night-time ritual of eating chopped fruit and watching Johnny Carson. I remember the patience you had with me when I reminded you to "s-t-o-p" while driving because I had just learned to read the word. I have to remind myself of the patience you had with me as my young daughters now do the very same thing.

I saw you as perfect as I did your mother, my great grandma. My young eyes saw you as beautiful. I remember you getting ready for church and admiring your perfection: your hair, your nails, your clothes, you. Remembering your hands they were always soft, well manicured, carrying a cute pocketbook and sometimes carrying me. Your hands hid all the hard work and hard times you had gone through and still were going through while raising me. My child's mind could not comprehend how difficult it was to raise a child a second time around, especially, while working full time and sometimes, as well, part time jobs. You made it seem easy, normal. Perhaps that was because you felt it was something I did not need to be concerned with. You realized "It shouldn't be hard to be a child" and you made sure that it wasn't for me. (Kimbro, 2003: 95)

Grandma's hands
Used to ache sometimes and swell
Grandma's hands ...

When I watch you with my girls, I'm reminded of the treasured relationship I had with Grandma, your mother and my great-grandmother. Grandma was my first connection to my history, my roots, and my existence as a person of African descent. My time spent with her was like a quiet history lesson (she was such a quiet natured woman—when she wanted to be). Some of my most treasured memories are the times I spent with her cooking. Cooking, as in most African American families, was definitely a grandmother (in my case great grandmother)- granddaughter bonding ritual. I absolutely loved it! She taught me the recipes of her childhood and as a result exposed me to cultures and traditions that, until adulthood, I thought were uniquely hers. I thought praline or "py-rine" candy and "cha cha" (chow chow) relish were delectables that she alone created, until I met other African Americans who were familiar with these foods.

I hold in my memory the instruction she gave me on quilting: how to make blocks and how to sew them together and how to tack. I still have my quilt that grandma made for my seventh birthday. I believe that was a part of her contribution to this world, her quilting. Her affliction with polio made working a traditional job physically impossible so she used what she knew to contribute what she could. Her quilts were not fancy; in fact they were particularly functional. Just the same every one delighted when she presented them with a quilt for a birthday or the arrival of a new baby. And she was filled with joy and pride to create them and give them away. I am just as delighted when I hold mine now as I remember being at seven when I received it. Holding it brings me a sense of comfort and peace. I feel grandma is near me then.

But you know MaMa, what I remember most about Grandma was her hands. I remember she used to always say to me "You're gonna miss these old hands one day." That always sent a little shudder through me. It still does because her words are so true. I do miss her hands. Those hands that held me on her lap when I cried because I hurt. Those hands that gently plaited my hair and scratched my scalp (our therapeutic ritual that we shared since she allowed me to plait and scratch her scalp also. I suppose this was her way of teaching me to braid hair.) Those hands shelling peas quietly for hours on end on her front porch or the porch of her sisters in Mississippi. Those hands, tough from picking up hot cast iron skillets and gripping those old wooden crutches she relied on for all of her life. Those hands whose thumbs twiddled hours upon hours when she sat beside her front door window during the last years of her life. Those hands achy, swelling and sore as cancer spread through her body. Those hands tough as she was, yet, soft as she was.

Her stories and experiences are still with me to this day. She is still with me to this day. I talk to her. She answers me.

Grandma's hands
Used to hand me a piece of candy
Grandma's hands
Picked me up each time I fell
Grandma's hands...

I know there were challenging times: a woman in midlife raising a girl trying to become a woman. My teenaged years were difficult for me so I know they were difficult for you. With age comes wisdom, and questions. Questions I was afraid to ask and questions I assume you were not able to answer. Questions like "Am I ever a burden to you?" "What are your dreams?" "Did you have to sacrifice them for your children or me?"

I know my typical teenaged behaviour was challenging for you to go through a second time with a granddaughter. Times had changed. You were in your mid 30s when your daughters were teenagers. You were at "mid life" and at an age when a woman expects to be through with such emotions and battles that usually accompany a teenager during your second round of parenting with me. I know it wasn't easy to hear me blasting my beloved Prince music repeatedly. I remember you almost yelling over the music to talk to me. I never realized how much discomfort this caused you after working all day. You shared with me recently that my music would really "get on [your] nerves" until one day a little voice inside you reminded you to "Let that girl enjoy her music. It makes her happy." After that you said you decided to spend time outside after work and give me space inside to listen to music. "All of my frustrations went away after that," you said.

During all of the milestones, the challenges, the accomplishments I have had, you have been there with me. My graduation from elementary school, high school, undergraduate and then graduate schools. My moving out my sophomore year of college and you not once letting on that this rite of passage was just as difficult for you as it was for me until after I was settled into my new environment (I suppose you did not want me to feel guilty for moving). Wherever I have gone in my life you have been there and where ever I go I know you will be there. When I called to tell you I was pregnant with my first child, you approached me and acknowledged me as a woman yet guided and directed me with the wisdom and tenderness an elder shows to the inexperienced. You told me that if I kept my baby you would help me every step of the way and you have. I would have been lost if you hadn't been there to show me how to bathe the baby, console her when she was crying, how to eat properly so I could continue to breastfeed and stay healthy, how to survive teething, ear infections, fevers and my own case of new mother stress and jitters. And you did the same thing for me when I had my second daughter.

Naturally, we have had our share of childrearing disagreements, where I needed to establish my authority and place as an adult rather than a child. As well I had to recognize your place as matriarch and the wisdom carrier and learn

to step back, learn what I needed to know and adapt your lessons to fit my individual circumstances.

Motherhood made me recognize that your role of protector did not end once I reached adulthood. In fact, I don't think it will ever end. It will most certainly change and hopefully I will be able to be your protector if or when necessary. But I know you will always be my source of security. In you I know, that I will always have someone who "has my back" and who will believe me if no one else will (I think of how you stand up for me now as I struggle with panic disorder and accompanying phobias. You may not fully understand what I am experiencing but you are supporting me without question).

I imagine this time of life must be a bit frightening for you as it is for me. It is now time for me to be your protector, for us to watch over one another. I want you to know the same security that I have felt all my life. I want you to know you will not be alone as long as I am around which is the same thing you made sure I knew as a child. I want to be strong when you can't. You have been strong all your life, out of necessity I am sure. You were strong enough to leave school in the tenth grade to provide support for your mother and sisters. And, you were strong enough to rebuild your life and the lives of your daughters after leaving an abusive marriage. Strong enough to quietly assume the role of single grandmother "mother" to me after raising two daughters of your own. Strong enough to go every Saturday to your daughter's home to help her with her young children while still raising me. Strong enough to work everyday, pick me up from school, take me to music lessons and relentlessly care for your mother in the last years of her life. Strong enough to bear the death of both your sisters on the same day. Strong enough to board a Greyhound Bus and travel more than 700 miles to come and help me with my children at age 78.

As I grow older I realize the struggles that aging produces within our society. I see how difficult it is to be taken seriously at times and to be given the respect that has most certainly been earned as a result of the trial and errors of living. I acknowledge the concern and, I imagine, fear of possible illness and the affordability of health care. And I am outraged at how expensive it is to age, the expense usually falling on the one who is aging of course. I sometimes worry about whether I will be able to hold up my end of responsibility for our taking care of one another. You have done your job, now I want to make sure I adequately do mine. I question if I will ever be half the woman you have been and are now and I wonder how many trial and error life lessons will I have to experience to get to where you are now.

But despite all my questioning and self-doubt, there is one thing I am certain. I am certain that you can rest and be assured that "*Until the end of time, I'll be there for you*" (Prince, 1987). We will triumph over any adversity together and through our strength we will make it by holding on to one another. Life is a circle with no beginning and no end, just a continuation of our love for one another.

References

"Did You Know?" 2004, March. Essence Magazine 34 (11): 30.

Gibson, P. A. 2002. "African American Grandmothers as Caregivers: Answering the Call to Help Their Grandchildren." Families in Society 83 (1): 35-44.

Kimbro, D. 2003. *What Keeps Me Standing: Letters from Black Grandmothers on Peace, Hope and Inspiration.* New York: Doubleday.

Prince. 1987. "Adore." *Sign 'O' the Times* [CD]. Burbank, CA: Warner Brother Records.

Withers, B. 1971. "Grandma's Hands." [Performed by Gladys Knight, 2001.] *At Last* [CD]. Los Angeles: MCA Records.

Carole Roy

Pesky Raging Grannies
Speaking Truth to Power with Wisdom, Humour and Spunky Actions

While little is written about older women's activism, this article seeks to acknowledge the Raging Grannies, a group of mostly older women and grandmothers who have been active in social and political protests since they started in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1987. Their example has inspired other women; there are now more than 70 groups of Raging Grannies keeping an eye on things and speaking up across Canada and in the United States, England, Australia, Greece, Japan, and Israel. These activist grannies have developed a unique approach to social and political protests. After doing research on a broad range of issues, they use creativity and humour in songs and actions aimed at creating greater awareness among the public, media and authorities alike. Their ability to turn difficult issues into accessible songs may be related to the skills necessary in the work of caring for their families.

The Raging Grannies offer a positive example of transforming rage and despair into creative activism to communicate their concerns for social and ecological justice. In the process they also challenge stereotypes of older women and aging. This article focuses on their distinctive approach, records some of the songs they have created and actions they have engaged in for justice and for the sake of future generations.

> What we grandmothers are doing with our lives, the problems we face now, the present true state of our relationships, the issues which we might raise as important—our priorities—are not considered interesting. These are never the subject of poems or political analysis by younger women. If they do break this rule, they are often punished by a rebuff from publishers who believe that "old ladies don't sell" (Copper, 1988: 11).

"Grandmothers' Squawk"
Tune: Grandfather's Clock. (*Granny Grapevine*, 1996a)

The Raging Grannies squawk / And do much more than talk
'Cause there's so much work to be done
There's the question of peace / While weapon sales increase
And foreign aid keeps going down
Our leaders of course / Show no shame or remorse
Supporting the slaughter called war
So we'll bitch, rage, and roar even more
Till we change our country's course
They say hi-tech war / Is good for trade
But notice how craftily / They chop and they slash
From our social economy ...
Hungry kids are a bloody shame ...
Come one, let's all rock / The ship of state
Together we can channel our rage
To change the way / The poor always pay
Politicians increase their own wage
They must clean up their act / Or we'll give them all the sack
We must be very much on our guard
While we bitch, rage, and roar even more

Since 1987, a group of mostly older women calling themselves the Raging Grannies has attracted a lot of attention with their creative approach to protest. Started in Victoria, British Columbia, they never expected that eighteen years later more than seventy groups of Raging Grannies across Canada and abroad would still be raising a little hell for authorities, trailing various Premiers, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, or US President George Bush with biting satirical lyrics and spunky actions. The United States, England, Australia, Greece, Japan, and Israel all have active groups of Raging Grannies keeping an eye on things. Protecting what they can of the world for the next generations was, and still is, at the root of Raging Grannies' motivation to take action: "Our most valuable possession all over the world is our children, we've got to make the world a better place for them," said Granny Shirley Morrison at the 1999 Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization (*Granny Grapevine,* 2000: 6). Playfully identifying with an "un-motherly" public rage, the Raging Grannies provide a dynamic example of political engagement and reveal that "citizenship can grow out of conscious motherhood" (Kaplan, 1997: 40). This article examines the Raging Grannies' unique and imaginative approach to protest using humour in songs and actions as well as some of the impact these activist grandmothers have had on stereotypes of aging.

From the first action the elements of their distinctive form of protest were

present. Having written letters, contacted MPs, filled petitions, marched in protests for many years, and experienced sexism and ageism in the peace movement, a group of mostly older women decided to experiment with street theatre. Their initial goal was to communicate their sense of urgency more directly and creatively, and raise awareness of the visits of American nuclear warships and submarines in the waters surrounding Victoria, which created a potential threat to the environment and to the health of people. On Valentine's Day 1987, the first group called the Raging Grannies offered a huge broken heart to their Member of Parliament, chairman of the defence committee at the time, for his lack of action on the nuclear issue ("Taxpaying heart not in MP's broken Valentine," 1987: A3). Dressed as proper old ladies, they also carried a ratty umbrella full of holes to convey the stupidity of sheltering under the nuclear umbrella and sang a satirical song to the tune of a lullaby to communicate their message. While the range of issues tackled by Raging Grannies has expanded widely beyond the nuclear issue, colourful costumes, imaginative props, dramatic actions, and satirical songs have come to define the Raging Grannies style. Grannies realized they had "to be seen to be heard" (Kaplan, 1997): "Older women are completely transparent and invisible. You can stand there for hours and you're not there," said Granny Joan Harvey (2002). With disarming smiles, gaudy shawls, outlandish hats, and flat sensible shoes they defy the invisibility many older women experience, divest themselves of an "artificial notion of decorum and dignity" by making fools of themselves, and challenge the stereotype of the feeble granny "who shuffles onto a TV ad looking for Geritol" (Walker, 1998). Grey hairs does not mean meekness: "The Raging Grannies have proven that it's not only wisdom that comes with age—humour, courage and outrage do too" (Quon, 2001: 12).

The Raging Grannies' vocabulary of tactics is broad and imaginative. With bonnets and banners, Victoria Grannies held a tea party on the deck of a U.S. warship, only to be unceremoniously evicted by a fuming captain who did not appreciate their humour or their commitment to peace (*Grapevine*, 2000: 10). While the threats that led to the first Gulf War escalated, Victoria Grannies who are World War II veterans resurrected old uniforms while others made new ones from baubles and shiny things. Dressed in these uniforms, they then showed up at the Armed Forces Recruitment Centre to volunteer for a tour of duty in the Gulf and spare young lives. Taken by surprise, and unable to discriminate on the basis of age, the officer had to work through the paperwork, providing an eye-catching photograph for the first page of the local newspaper the next day! ("Raging Grannies ready for war," 1990: A1)

The Montreal Raging Grannies, concerned about Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL)'s plan to bury highly radioactive nuclear waste in the Canadian Shield, crashed the Federal Environment Assessment Review hearing of AECL's plan and offered their own alternative recipe for radioactive disposal, the Radioactive Road Resurfacing recipe:

> Take a pinch of plutonium (holding your breath because 1 microgram will give you lung cancer).
> Add half a cup of strontium (fast before the cup melts).
> Mix well and spread evenly on road surface.
>
> The formula, which only needs to be applied once a millennium ... comes with the following guarantee: It will glow in the dark and is self defrosting for at least 1,000 years. ("Raging Grannies propose solution for nuclear waste," 1990: 1-2)

Ottawa Raging Grannies take advantage of the special opportunities that come from living in a city that is the seat of the federal government. When the Department of Defence declared a search for the missing papers during the Somalia affair, the Ottawa Grannies were only too happy to contribute their skills and offer their help to search for the missing papers. Armed with songs and magnifying glasses, they chased the personnel on their way to work, "endlessly scrutinizing briefcases and pawing earnestly through waste containers" (*Granny Grapevine*, 1996b: 4).

Many Grannies went to Quebec City to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Granny Linda Slavin went because her planet is under siege, the environment threatened, people hungry and homeless (2001: A4). She adds:

> When politicians meet behind barricades to promote the text of a commercial agreement allowing corporations to make money while threatening education, health, social services and nature, I have to be counted .... A few were unnecessarily violent but the state violence in Quebec was far worse: plastic bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray linked the Canadian government to the systemic human rights abuses in many of the countries represented at the summit. Most protesters were determined to confront this insult to democracy creatively. (2001: A4).

"The FTAA Hokey-Pokey"
Tune: Hockey Pockey. (Seifred Collection)

They put the rich folks in / They put the poor folks out /
They put their ideas in
And they hide them all about / They spin the information
(chorus) And they twist it all around/ That's what it's all about!!!
They have the corporations in / They have the little guys out /
The NGO's are nowhere really

Kathleen Foy, a frail 90-year-old Granny from Montreal, defied the will of her family and went to Quebec City in a wheelchair, in spite of the threat

of tear gas, because she felt the need to stand up for democracy. On the day of the march, a few Grannies left the safety of numbers to go to the "wall" and

> came across a group of heavily armed police in full combat gear. The police were unaccountably preventing the peaceful progress of a small group of protesters trying to make their way down a street: "The police looked more like armadillos," according to the small Granny's band fearless leader Alma, aged 78. One "amardillo" stepped forward, fingering his rubber-bullet gun. Undeterred, the Granny group linked arms and put themselves between the small group of protesters and the police. First they sang, *Hysteria rules today / When people claim / They have a right to demonstrate / Our leaders in their wisdom hope / To hide away from protest / Behind a ten foot barricade / But really there's no contest.* Then [they] took small steps towards the police [singing] "We shall overcome," and a few more steps forward, voices cracking a little.... Alma explained to the police that the Grannies could indeed be their mothers or their grandmothers, but that they were simply there for peaceful purposes and posed no danger. Amazingly, the police then retreated a few steps. (Land, 2001: 2)

On the way back from the wall, young people hugged and thanked Grannies for being there. Raging Grannies easily connect with youth.

A few Raging Grannies have engaged in non-violent civil disobedience. In 1988, Grannies were arrested for protesting U.S. nuclear warships in Canadian waters in an action called Grandmother Peace at the military base in Nanoose Bay, B.C. Another Granny, Alison Acker, a former university professor, was also arrested in 1993 for protesting logging at Clayoquot Sound, B.C:

> We were concerned that the press was making it look like only a load of crazy young kids was protesting about the logging .... It's not just young people who are concerned about the future of the planet. Us old birds care too. (Birch, 2001: 109)

On February 13, 2000, the day after the Ontario provincial government passed a law making it illegal to squeegee, London (Ontario) Grannies in their 80s took a swipe at the law by squeegeeing at a busy intersection and raising money for the local food bank.

> "People have to become more aware of the homeless," said 86-year-old Florence Boyd-Graham, who blasted the province's crack-down on squeegee kids and noted that at her age, she doesn't "give a hell" about what people think of her politics.... Michelle LeBoutillier said the Grannies were "concerned" they might get charged, but were compelled to disobey the law because they "felt so strongly that

> poverty isn't being addressed in the way it should be." (Fenlon, 2000: A1)

As Granny Rose DeShaw wrote in the *Globe and Mail*, "Underneath the humour in the songs and costumes there is a nod to the wisdom of older women" (1997: A20). She continues:

> Walt Whitman calls it "The divine maternity." He talks about a woman of 80 called "The Peacemaker who was tacitly agreed on as ... a settler of difficulties and a reconciler in the land." That's my granny model. If ever a country needed reconciling, it is Canada at the end of the nineties. Governmental dumbness has spread so fast it could keep an entire platoon of grannies singing our lungs out. Some buffoon wants to turn the 300-year old fort in our town into a casino. Abused women are now allowed to stay only two days in shelters in Ontario. And they're trying to privatize fire departments. (1997: A20)

What is necessary to join this dynamic sorority is "attitude," which means to "take an off-beat angle and find ways to defy authority when necessary," says Granny Phyllis Creighton (2001). "Attitude" means to deeply love without sentimentality, to be compassionate, yet a rock when standing in defence of people, principles, or the earth. It requires integrity and the refusal to allow bureaucracies to dictate, as they tend to atrophy the spirit or fossilize life into meaningless patterns. "Attitude" means to be spontaneous and to act as if the world matters. It is a willingness to engage with others with respect and honesty, and take risks because the stakes are so high.

Caring and interconnectedness are at the heart of why Grannies insist on having their voices heard. Muriel Duckworth, an inspiring 96-year-old Raging Granny and a lifelong peace activist, acknowledges how a sense of connection is central to her motivation: "If you feel your link to all people, that other people matter as much as you do yourself, and you matter a lot, then that link with people makes you do what you can so that other people should have a chance too" (Kerans, 1996: 232). This sense of connection and caring translates into anger, rage, and courage when people are victims of injustice. As Granny Joan Harvey (2002) said, "If people all through history didn't stick their necks out to help other people, where would we be?" In turn, caring is also a source of hope and courage, as Granny Barbara Seifred (2002) explained:

> Of course we have to carry on and we have to have hope and we have to work for change and work to give hope to young people, because I think they must be bloody well pissed off, if I may say so, with what we've done with this world .... There's an obligation to not let things just slide into ruins. I don't think you can exaggerate the seriousness of the situation ... in the nuclear weapons age there are no exaggera-

> tions. *They* are the exaggeration of power and destruction and horror beyond exaggeration. So it's time to speak up whenever I can and rattle the bars, rattle the cage, practice democracy.... It's our obligation as citizens.

The Raging Grannies' ability to use paradox in the creation of humour comes in part from their work of caring as mothers and grandmothers. Mechthild Hart (1992) suggests that mothering work cannot easily separate the work involved in the care of the body from the work required in the care of the mind. As well, theory must apply to specific individuals and cannot be separated from practical application. This work demands closeness and involvement as the knowledge of a child is never absolute and cannot easily generate general propositions, so the mother must be open to discoveries (Hart, 1992: 187-188). Moving between "critical distance" and "mimetic nearness" and recognizing that both "mutually influence and enhance rather than exclude each other" is at the heart of an epistemology which reflects the importance of equality and reciprocity rather than dominance: "Only such dialectical unity.... can keep the bond between work, knowledge and experience intact" (1992: 183). Engaging with dialectical unity requires a comprehensive as well as differentiating process, which allows for a more complex reality to emerge where both similarities and differences are important. This process requires valuing "thought and emotion, analysis and creativity, process and content, caring and judgement, listening and speaking" (1992: 192-193).

The Raging Grannies reveal their grasp of this dialectical unity by making use of paradoxes effectively when using serious factual information in humorous constructs or by emphasizing caring and anger at the same time, as their name does. The creation of humour requires juxtaposing frames of reference not usually related to each other. Jane R. Prétat (1994), a Jungian analyst, also suggests that old age is a time of metanoia, a time to integrate opposites. This integration can prove dangerous for those who have vested interests in the status quo. Harriet Rosenberg (1995) suggests that housewife activists are especially feared by corporations because they are unwilling to compromise with the health of their families (1995: 198). The work and experience of mothering, the ability of older people to see connections and integrate various aspects, and the unwillingness of housewife activists to compromise converge into the indomitable spirit of the Raging Grannies. Caring gives people "the energy and the commitment to keep at it:" without a sense of connection "you wouldn't put your neck out and you wouldn't put yourself on the line and you wouldn't open yourself" to verbal abuse and ridicule, says Granny Joan Harvey (2002). They link caring and protest and, according to Warren Magnusson, professor of Political Sciences at the University of Victoria, turn their identity, usually a liability, into a resource (1990: 536). Their actions express the belief that "what ordinary people think and do is actually more crucial for the movement's success than what the states do"

(Magnusson, 1990: 536).

And in the process, they challenge stereotypes of aging and of older women:

> "Wrinkle, wrinkle aging star"
> Tune: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. (*Granny Grapevine*, 1995: 4)
>
> *Who cares just how old you are? / Your hair is grey, your dentures click*
> *Your bosom sags, your ankle's thick /*
> *Your joints all creak, your arthritis plagues*
> *You've got all the symptoms of Raging Age .../*
> *Hurrah for Age, Age, now's the time to rage ...*
> *Hurrah for Age, Age, to Hell with being beige /*
> *We won't stay cooped up in a cage*
> *Our eyes are dim but our tongues are sharp /*
> *We go out on a limb, our wits are sharp*
> *Yes we've got years, years and you'd better get it clear /*
> *A raging gran's a force to fear*

The Raging Grannies have been introduced as Recycled Teenagers! Their spunky approach makes grannydom exciting for youth: "I hope I'm doing that kind of stuff when I'm older," said a student watching Grannies' anti-war toys protest (Munro, 1998: [np]). "Today I want to be a granny," wrote Emily Worts in her search for hope after September 11, 2001 (2001: [np]). Former Granny Hilda Marczak (1998) has a collection of letters from junior high students which includes the following comments:

> I'm very scared of nuclear war myself and I'm glad you're trying to make people aware of what's happening.
>
> Your performance opened my eyes to what I was trying to ignore.
>
> I personally am very afraid of nuclear war. I don't like living everyday wondering if disaster is going to strike. Watching you perform made me laugh but also made me think. If I had the guts I would get up and express my feelings to the world.
>
> I haven't really been thinking about nuclear arms and was surprised when you explained that we are going to be buying those submarines. I thought we were getting rid of our weapons, not getting more! You certainly opened my eyes.

A university student also wrote eloquently about meeting the Montreal Grannies at a protest march against cuts to health care:

> It isn't often that three scatter-brained male roommates ... grudgingly throw on wrinkled pants and end up dining with ten fabulous women they meet walking down the street. Oddly enough, this was the reality of my Saturday .... A phalanx of older women ... dressed in hideous layers of fabric and clownish shawls while they sang cheeky verses to common tunes .... The grannies were by far the highlight of a long march. While the grannies shared their political knowledge and concerns with us, they listened to what we had to say too. It was an enlightening exchange .... I remember leaving the buffet feeling somewhat inspired. I had just met a group of extremely creative, politically active older women who were trying to improve the lives of their fellow citizens ... one of the grannies mentioned that they might be attending the upcoming anti-globalization rallies in Quebec City. She said that if the grannies were able to make the trip they would stand in the front line ... and stare down riot police, florescent shawls on shoulders, sun hats laden with protest pins and song sheets firmly clasped in 80-year-old hands. (Fletcher, 2000: 4)

The opposite of hope is not anger but indifference. Rage born of compassion fuels creativity and risk taking. Anger and imaginative actions form a dynamic mix. The Raging Grannies positively transform rage and despair into creativity, commitment, at times courage. They have found the delicate balance Pam McAllister wrote about:

> To focus on rage alone will exhaust our strength, forge our energy into a tool of the patriarchy's death-lure, force us to concede allegiance to the path of violence and destruction .... [but] Compassion without rage renders us impotent, seduces us into watered-down humanism, stifles our good energy. Without rage we settle for slow change, feel thankful for tidbits of autonomy .... It is with our rage that we ... find the courage to risk resistance. (1982: iv)

The Raging Grannies have created a dynamic figure of protest that allows for a collective identity as well as autonomy for local groups. They are a meaningful part of the chorus of dissent that is concerned with justice and a viable future. As Raging Grannies refuse to give up or shut up, they make us laugh so we can find insights and courage to boldly honour life.

> rage and compassion in the face of suffering and injustice,
> resilience in the face of opposition and set-backs,
> laughter in the face of failure and mistakes,
> and virtuosity
> audacious, breathtaking, disciplined, and heartfelt
> in the face of limits. (Welch, 1999: 61)

References

Birch, Simon. 2001. "Where middle age is all the rage." *SAGA* (September): 108-110.

Carr, Betsy. 2001. Interview with author, November 1. Toronto, Ontario.

Copper, Baba. 1988. *Over the Hill: Reflections on Ageism Between Women.* Freedom, California: The Crossing Press.

Creighton, Phyllis. 2001. Interview with author, November 1. Toronto, Ontario.

DeShaw, Rose. 1997. "Goofy-hatted reconcilers in the land." *The Globe and Mail* (April 10): A20.

Fenlon, Brodie. 2000. "Raging Grannies take a swipe at squeegee law." *The London Free Press* (February 13): A1.

Fletcher, Tom. 2000. "Grandmothers making a difference." *The Concordian* (November 1): 4.

Granny Grapevine. 1995, Summer. Saltspring Island Raging Grannies.

Granny Grapevine. 1996a, Summer. Edmonton Raging Grannies.

Granny Grapevine. 1996b, Fall. Edmonton Raging Grannies.

Granny Grapevine. 2000. Winter. Betty Brightwell, ed. Victoria.

Hart, Mechthild. 1992. *Working and Educating for Life: Feminist and International Perspectives on Adult Education.* New York: Routledge.

Harvey, Joan. 2002. Interview with author, March 18. Toronto, Ontario.

Kaplan, Temma. 1997. *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements.* New York: Routledge.

Kerans, Marion Douglas. 1996. *Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active Pacifist.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Land, Peggy. 2001. "Moments of faith at the wall." *Peace & Environment News* (May/June): 2.

Magnusson, Warren. 1990. "Critical Social Movements: De-centering the State." Alain-G. Gagnon and James P. Pickerton, eds. *Canadian Politics: An Introduction to the Discipline.* Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press: 525-541.

Marczak, Hilda. 1998. Interview with author, May 15. Victoria, B.C.

McAllister, Pam. Ed. 1982. "Introduction." *Reweaving the web of life: Feminism and nonviolence.* Philadelphia: New Society Publishers: i-viii.

Munro, Rob. 1998. "Grannies rage gently: Group's first protest takes aim at violent children's toys." *The Daily Courier* (December 11): [np]. Louise Swift Collection.

Prétat, Jane R. 1994. *Coming to Age: The Croning Years and Late-Life Transformation.* Toronto: Inner City Books.

Quon, Anna. 2001. "A passion for protest: The Raging Grannies sing for peace and justice." *Southender* (March): 12.

"Raging Grannies propose solution for nuclear waste." 1990. *The Montreal Downtowner* (November 21): 1-2.

"Raging Grannies ready for war." 1990: *Times-Colonist* (November 2): A1.

Rosenberg, Harriet G. 1995. "From Trash to Treasure: Housewife Activists and the Environmental Justice Movement." Jane Schneider and Rayna Rapp, eds. *Articulating Hidden Histories: Exploring the Influence of Eric R. Wolf.* Berkeley: University of California Press: 190-204.

Seifred, Barbara Calvert. 2002. Interview with author, March 28. Montreal, Quebec.

Slavin, Linda. 2001. "Should have gone to the fence." [Letter to the editor]. *The Peterborough Examiner* (April 24): A4.

"Taxpaying heart not in MP's broken Valentine." 1987. *Times-Colonist* (February 14): A3.

Walker, Moira. 1998. Interview with author, May 17. Victoria, BC.

Welch, Sharon D. 1999. *Sweet Dreams in America: Making Ethics and Spirituality Work.* New York: Routledge.

Worts, Emily. 2001. "Grannies treasure songs of hope, songs of peace." *The Packet & Times* (October [nd]): 8. Dorothy Fletcher Collection.

Rebecca Raby

Teenage Girls and their Grandmothers

Building Connections Across Difference

While those in adolescence and old age tend to be quite separated in our society, a strong link frequently exists between grandparents and their adolescent grandchildren. "Teenage Girls and their Grandmothers: Building Connections Across Difference" draws on semi-structured interviews with 12 teenage girls and their grandmothers to qualitatively examine interactions between these generations. Each generation tended to rely on media, folklore and grandchild-grandparent contact to learn about the other generation. Both sets of participants reproduced stereotypes of adolescence and grandparenthood that would seem to exacerbate a division between these quite separate times of life. Two patterns prevented such a division: first, relatives were often viewed as exceptions to the stereotype, particularly in the case of granddaughters. Second, generational distinctions were used to build or mediate cross-generational relationships, especially in custodial relationships where the grandmother is parenting the granddaughter.

Teenagers and older adults are often involved in quite separate community and leisure activities, mitigating against strong links across generations. Yet strong bonds do form, especially between teenagers and grandparents (Boon & Brussoni, 1996; Matthews & Sprey, 1985; Baranowski, 1982). The bulk of literature on grandparent-grandchild relations addresses social-structural and life course features that either reduce or facilitate such intergenerational links. In contrast, this analysis concentrates on *interactions* between grandmothers and their adolescent granddaughters, specifically exploring how stereotypes about adolescence and grandparenthood, while potentially dividing generations, are also used to build cross-generational relationships, particularly in custodial relationships where the grandmother is parenting the granddaughter.

Literature review

Most literature on grandparent-grandchild relationships focuses on structural features that strengthen or weaken these relationships, particularly those linked to decisions made by the parents who separate the two generations. Quality of parent-grandparent relations, geographic proximity and frequency of childhood visits all influence grandchild-grandparent relations (Boon & Brussoni, 1996; Matthews & Sprey, 1985). Various studies also indicate the relevance of culture (Hurme 1997; Sokolovsky, 1997) and race (Saluter, 1996, Burton, 1996), though less so of class (Cherlin and Furstenberg, 1985; Di Leonardo, 1987).

Maternal grandmothers tend to have a stronger role in their grandchildren's lives than either paternal grandmothers or grandfathers (Boon & Brussoni, 1996; Matthews & Sprey, 1985). Granddaughters are also slightly more likely than grandsons to connect with their grandparents (Hirsch, Mickus and Boerger, 2002). The importance of gender is not surprising, as kinship connections tend to be maintained by women (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Di Leonardo, 1987), grandmothers tend to live longer than grandfathers (Szinovacz, 1998) and maternal grandmothers are most likely to be custodial grandparents (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001). Grandparents' and grandchildren's ages (Troll, 1980; Burton, 1987), grandchildren's birth order (Szinovacz, 1998), grandparents' involvement with their own grandparents (Bengston & Robertson, 1985) and increased life expectancy (Szinovacz, 1998; Aldous, 1995) are also relevant.

Finally, there is also a growing literature addressing the increasing trend for grandchildren to be raised by their grandparents, particularly their grandmothers, often due to negative circumstances such as drug use or neglect within the intermediary generation (Goodman & Silverstein, 2001; Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2000).

Adolescents have more freedom than children to determine and influence how much contact they will have with their grandparents (Brussoni & Boon, 1998). Distancing between teenage grandchildren and their grandparents was indicated by Colleen Johnson (1983) and by Karen Roberto & Johanna Stroes (1992) yet while Marc Baranowski (1982) observes that modern teenagers tend to prefer spending time with peers than with family, he and Lynne Hodgson (1992) suggest that closeness deepens between grandchildren and their grandparents as they get older, perhaps as grandparents provide historical continuity (Baranowski, 1982). Both teenagers and (many) grandparents, as older people, also share a transition location, either entering or leaving a presumably stable adulthood (Hockey & James, 1993; Lesko, 1996) and an age-related marginality to middle adulthood, suggesting potential for solidarity (Hockey & James, 1993).

Suffice to say, while those in adolescence and old age tend to be quite separated in our society, a strong link frequently exists between grandparents and their adolescent grandchildren (Brussoni & Boon, 1998). Structural conditions affect the shape of specific grandparent-grandchild relations, condi-

tions that must be negotiated by grandparents and grandchildren. They also negotiate a range of available discursive materials. We see this in a variety of potential grandparenting styles and roles (Mueller, Wilhelm & Elder, 2002; Brussoni & Boon, 1998; Van Ranst, Verschueren & Marcoen, 1995) and in dominant stereotypes of adolescence and grandmotherhood examined below.

Methodology

This article draws on semi-structured interviews with teenage girls and their grandmothers that were primarily conducted to examine cross-generational perceptions and experiences of adolescence. A secondary aim was to explore the contexts within which grandmothers and granddaughters negotiate their relationships. This study should therefore be considered exploratory. I interviewed 12 teenage girls, two of whom were sisters, and eleven grandmothers (see Table A). Eight of the granddaughters were also available to be interviewed a second time in order to further investigate their experiences of adolescence. Teenagers ranged from 13 to 19, were either white or black, and came from a variety of religious and class backgrounds. Most lived in Toronto, although several in smaller surrounding cities. Grandmothers ranged from ages 54 to 85 and were more widely distributed geographically, with one living in California, one in Alberta and four others in Southern Ontario cities outside Toronto. Grandmother-granddaughter dynamics varied widely, with three grandmothers in on-going custodial roles, three significantly involved in care-taking responsibilities and three relationships spanning long distances. Two-thirds of the grandmothers were maternal.

Each interview was approximately one hour and pairs were interviewed separately. Pairs were found through diverse, informal contacts and advertising. All pairs who agreed to participate were subsequently interviewed. Granddaughters were asked about stereotypes of older people, of grandmothers and of adolescents, and about their relationship with their grandmother. Grandmothers were asked what it means to be a grandmother, how it differs from being a mother, whether there is 'stereotypical' grandmother and whether they fit that stereotype or not. They were also asked about their perceptions of adolescents in general and their granddaughters as specific adolescents. The relationships between the pairs were for the most part close and positive. There were, however, several grandmother-granddaughter pairs that were more distant. These pairs did not seem to produce dramatically different comments from those who were closer, except for those in custodial relationships (discussed below).

Interview transcripts were roughly coded into topic areas then all transcript portions pertaining to relationships between grandmothers and their granddaughters were temporarily separated from the full interview transcript and coded three times. As themes emerged from the data, these were listed separately. Full interviews were read through a final time to check the context of selected quotes. All coding and analysis was conducted by the author.

Table A: Respondents, Granddaughters and Grandmothers

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Level of caretaking
Rita	15	Caribbean / Anglo	Has custody
Marjorie	69	Anglo	
Janelle	18	Caribbean	Almost daily visiting
Bess	55	Caribbean	
Jazz	18	Caribbean-Canadian	High involvement in past, now occasional visiting
Sandy	63	Caribbean	
Angela	14	Anglo	Babysitting
Catherine	64	Scottish	
Tracy	17	Anglo	High involvement in past,
Jan	67	Anglo	now frequent visiting
Shannon	18	Caribbean	Daily contact,
Rose	68	Caribbean	some parenting
Jess	13	Anglo	Short, weekly visiting
Anne	73	Anglo	
Elizabeth	15	Anglo	Long distance,
Claire	72	European-American	yearly visiting
Allanah	18	Anglo	High involvement in past,
Beatrice	85	Anglo	then occasional visiting
Vienna	16	Anglo/Jewish	Long distance,
Gladys	84	Anglo	yearly visiting
Leah	15	Jewish	Frequent, weekly visiting
Shoshana	19	Jewish	
Hannah	69	Jewish	

Generalizations and stereotypes

Stereotypes can affect how we conceptualize ourselves and how others respond to us (Berger & Luckman, 1967). They are broad generalizations that are often compared to, and distinguished from, some kind of underlying truth. I asked respondents to discuss stereotypes of grandparents, grandmothers and teenagers. These stereotypes were sometimes acknowledged by respondents to be over-generalizations, yet they nonetheless discursively produce knowledge about teenagers and grandmothers. Most of the grandmothers knew few teenagers other than their own grandchild or grandchildren. Teenagers, similarly, did not interact much with older adults outside the family. Each tended to rely on media, folklore and grandchild-grandparent contact to learn about the other generation. Stereotypes adopted through media and folklore contribute to images of teenagers and grandmothers as poles apart.

Perceptions of teenagers

While some grandmothers were quite positive about teenagers, most notably Anne (73), most granddaughters and grandmothers viewed teenagers negatively, reflecting popular representations of adolescence that construct teenagers as social problems (Raby, 2002; Lesko, 1996; Griffin, 1993):

> Bess (55): *I don't know what's happening with this last generation today. No problem with my teenagers. Kids want to show off, some of them with friends, and will do things they don't want to do. No manners. No respect for no one—kids in the mall.*

> Jan (67): *I find a lot of kids rude, but in the general scheme of things, they don't—they wouldn't think of moving off the sidewalk to get out of your way, they'd walk through and that kind of thing, but that's not because they're teenagers, [its] because they're not properly brought up.*

Beatrice (85) identified teenagers today as hanging out in bars, drinking, doing drugs and getting into trouble and Claire (72) drew on her experience as a nurse in California to describe teenagers as trouble-makers and drug users. For these grandmothers such perceptions were presented as fact, with the caveat that their own grandchildren are exceptions. Most grandmothers also provided an explanation for why teenagers are such a problem, usually focusing on media influences, peer pressure or weak parenting.

The granddaughters also cited a number of stereotypes that people have about teenagers. They argued that people see teenagers as rude, uninterested, apathetic, trouble-makers, untrustworthy, and frightening. The granddaughters routinely perceived such portrayals to be unfair generalizations, however. Both Tracy (17) and Angela (14) suggested that people do not "give teenagers the chance" because they base their interactions on negative stereotypes. Several

felt that a subset of teenagers bring such portrayals on the rest of them and Jazz, Shannon, Elizabeth and Vienna all suggested that some teenagers behave badly because they're expected to. But overall, the young women were much more likely to identify stereotypes of teenagers as unfair generalizations based on the activities of a few. Neither grandmothers nor granddaughters discussed these stereotypes in relation to gender.

Several conclusions can be made here. First, most grandmothers made broad, negative generalizations about teenagers today, which they contrasted with their "good," exceptional grandchildren. This dichotomizing of "good" and "bad" teenagers was also evident in the teenagers' comments, although they were more likely to suggest that bad teens are in the minority. Importantly, however, grandmothers involved in parenting had a more complicated familiarity with their granddaughters, preventing them from idealizing them, but also softening their negative views of teenagers overall. Through parenting, grandmothers come to see teenagers as more contextualized.

To some extent, these comments are promising. Cross-generational contact seems valuable for disrupting negative stereotypes. Also, grandmothers are willing to provide explanations for teenagers' negative behaviour, shifting blame to external social influences. Yet it is unfortunate that the grandmothers do not expand on their admiration for their grandchildren to recognize that general, negative images of teens are not always accurate.

Perceptions of grandmothers and old age

Perceptions of grandmothers conflate with those of elderly women (Troll, 1980; Johnson 1983) and while some grandmothers are quite young, many are older, particularly when their grandchildren are teenagers (Connidis, 2001; Troll, 1980). Roma Hanks (2001) cites negative portrayals of grandmothers in children's literature in which grandmothers are presented as disabled, inactive and dependent, but she also suggests that television and internet representations of grandmothers are growing increasingly positive. Johnson (1983) interviewed grandmothers who identified the "traditional" conception of grandmothers as old, nurturing and maternal yet who were critical of this image as too narrow, domestic and "old." Ideally, they suggested, a "modern" grandmother "should be fun-loving" (1983:553), engaging her grandchildren in a diversity of activities.

In my interviews, several teenage respondents identified older people in general as judgmental (Rita, 15), frail and weak (Janelle, 18) and rude to teenagers (Tracy, 17). But these were the exceptions. Most equated grandmothers with old age and suggested that stereotypes of grandmothers frame them as maternal, older and active. These images were then compared to their own grandmothers, with a focus on specific activities such as baking, cooking, knitting, and playing cards:

Tracy (17): *Well, she likes to bake, you know, that kind of thing, and she*

> *takes care of the family. I don't know, she's just the grandmotherly type. It's hard to explain. It's mostly the baking thing, that's like.... She does the whole like playing bridge, lawn-bowling, the golf kind of thing. Like any other older person. There's a stereotype for you.* (small laugh)

Many sorted which activities fit from which ones did not. For example, Vienna (16) said that grandmas are stereotyped as "little, doing baking and wearing dresses" but observes that although her grandma bakes, she wears pants and is busy, strong and assertive. Similarly, Elizabeth (15) saw her grandma fitting the stereotype in some respects (e.g. knitting) but not others (e.g. she jogs and bikes). Often such distinctions made reference to age and whether their grandmother acts older or younger. Unexpectedly, unlike the more contextualized views of teenagers held by custodial grandmothers, custodial granddaughters viewed their grandmothers through overt dichotomies. Jazz (18) and Rita (15), both of whom were quite significantly parented by their grandmothers, were more likely to say that their grandmother is old and *directly* fits a stereotype. Yet Shannon (18) and Alannah (18), whose grandmothers also took on a parenting role, denied that there is a stereotype at all. Perhaps, for some, their grandmother's role is redefined through their care-taking while for others age or generational differences are felt more acutely in a custodial situation. Clearly, specific features of, and variations in, the custodial parenting dynamic need to be further explored.

The grandmothers cited similar stereotypes, especially regarding care-taking (the baking, knitting grandma) and fun (card-playing, lawn-bowling) but recognized greater diversity among grandmothers than the granddaughters did and several noted themselves as exceptions. Sandy saw herself as an atypical grandmother due to her lack of resources which prevented her from buying gifts. Marjorie saw herself as an exception because of her involvement in parenting and Jan identified herself as atypical because she plays blackjack. Like the grandmothers in Johnson's study (1983), most of the grandmothers also disassociated themselves from a more "elderly" image of grandmotherhood.

For both teenagers and their grandmothers, stereotypes of grandmotherhood were mentioned less frequently than those of adolescence, tended to be benign, and were often partially applied, if at all, based on specific activities. While specific teenage granddaughters were seen as absolute exceptions to stereotypes of teenagers, specific grandmothers were framed instead as *mediated* exceptions (based primarily on their activities). While there is promise for grandparent-grandchild relations to disrupt negative portrayals, too often relatives are framed as exceptions and common stereotypes would seem to create a gap between the generations. How are such gaps managed? How do people negotiate such stereotypes and generational differences in the *building* of relationships? I found a paradox here in that differences that would seem to separate these generations are used as tools to maintain connection.

Use of age effects and generation to negotiate relations

There were a number of ways that the respondents built relationships with one another: mutual care-taking, frequent phone calls or visits, discussing family dynamics, and shared activities such as card-playing or shopping, for instance. Some of the respondents saw their grandmothers every day and others only once or twice a year, but all participated in at least some of these activities, independent of the intervening generation. The relationships were considered valuable to both the granddaughters and the grandmothers. They were also negotiated across difference. In the remainder of this paper I focus on the active use and reproduction of age-related assumptions and stereotypes in the negotiation of these relationships.

Adjusting for generational age positions

One way in which distinct life course locations were used to build relationships with one another was through adjusting to, or allowing for, the other generations' age position. For example, granddaughters adjusted to their grandmothers based on mortality and the limited time available to build a relationship.

> Alannah (18): *She's older. I'm really beginning to appreciate her now more. Like the time that I spend with her because she's gonna be like 87.*

> Vienna (16): [after sleeping in during a visit to her grandparents] *And I felt bad too because I mean both my grandma and grandpa are getting older and I felt like I should have been spending more time with them but I was sleeping so much.*

They draw on their grandparents' distinct life course locations to emphasize the *need* for relationship. Several also suggested that they are more tolerant of their grandmothers because of age. Shannon (18) said:

> *Sometimes older people get ignorant about little things but I don't take them too much because of her age—she would say "why do you have to go out with your friends?" and I see she just wants company and so I stay home.*

Here age effects were drawn on to provide a context for deeper interaction, to facilitate connection through care-taking and to defuse fault or blame.

Similarly, Jeanne Thomas and Nancy Datan (1985) found that grandparents recognize that their relationships with their grandchildren change over time as the grandchildren age. For instance, as her granddaughter is now a teenager, Hanna (69) has adjusted towards being more of a friend: "I don't mean a friend that's the same age, but I try not to tell them too much—let their mother do it." Hanna and Anne (73) avoids feeling rejection by drawing on developmental assumptions that teenagers are inherently peer-related:

I: *Do you ever [interact] one on one?*

Anne: *Not as much now that she's getting older now. I did before, but no. Not as much now.*

I: *Are you sad?*

Anne: *No, because again, I think this is a natural stage. Right now, her friends are very, very ... and I remember, it was a chore and I don't want it to be a chore. You know.*

I: *To hang out with you?*

Anne: *Yeah.*

Similarly, grandmothers shifted their approaches to discipline. As Bess (55) stated "... there are ups and downs, especially at a certain age. 'I am big now, I can do this, I can do that.'" Beatrice does not think her grandchildren would listen if she got angry with them "for doing something bad" as they are older now. In these examples, potential conflict over behaviours is dealt with by referring to shifting age-based expectations. Clearly there are similar shifts in parenthood regarding discipline as families adjust to children growing up and moving out. In this instance, age norms provide a structure within which to make sense of relations.

Age differences as a source of assistance

Age differences and intergenerational ties can also be deployed as a source of assistance. In a particularly interesting interview excerpt, Alannah (18) referred to age and age difference to suggest an alliance between her grandmother and herself in opposition to her parents:

Yeah, I was freaking out that night, I was so angry at my stepmother. But my grandmother was very, like she freaked out on me and she, I remember she slapped me across the face and stuff. And I felt really bad for having to put like, an old woman through that. But she could totally understand where I was coming from, being her age and everything and her relationship with my dad and my stepmother, you know? She totally understood it and she really stuck up for me and everything.... So I appreciate that.

Despite her grandmother getting angry at her and even slapping her, Alannah feels badly about the incident because her grandmother's an "old woman," suggesting that she should be spared intense conflict. Yet she also feels a connection with her grandmother, as they both know her father and stepmother and this knowledge creates an alliance between them. Also, her

grandmother's age supplies her with an understanding of the situation, perhaps a kind of wisdom or deeper knowledge of family relations than other family members might have.

Generational differences used to negotiate conflict

Finally, generational differences were used to link the two generations and to negotiate conflict. Life course theorists suggest that such generational issues are raised because of significant gaps between parenting and teenage experiences 50 or 60 years ago and today. Here I am interested in how such generational differences are emphasized and the effects of such emphases. For example, Vienna (16) thinks that her grandmother, Gladys (84), does not approve of how her mother raised Vienna and her sisters to be outspoken:

> *... She's from a different time. The expectations are so different. But I think she's pretty good with dealing with it all, like she's not conniving or passive-aggressive about it at all, she's pretty accepting and adapting and I think it's because she's a really intelligent person.*

Vienna focuses on generational differences to provide a context for disagreements between her grandmother and her mother and then recognizes that despite this difference there is a good inter-generational connection because Gladys deals well with these differences and attributes this ability to particular personal skills that Gladys has. The conflict is about generation, but the connection is about personal abilities.

Such generational differences seemed particularly salient in custodial relationships. These strategic uses of age norms were most vividly illustrated in two custodial pairs that I interviewed, Rita and Marjorie and Jazz and Sandy.

Rita was 15 at the time of the interview. Her mother is white and her father, who she does not see, is Black. She was living with her maternal grandparents at the time of the interview as her (single) mother was having personal difficulties. Rita was clearly frustrated with aspects of her grandparents' parenting rules. She attributed these rules to generational differences:

> *Um. I don't know. Like I don't mind it here but it's just hard 'cause they're grandparents like they're so ... they grew up back when and they don't understand. That's what's hard. It's not who they are it's just their views on things are completely different and you can't change their mind no matter what 'cause they're right.*

Rita suggests that "it's not who they are," deflecting her criticisms away from their personalities and placing them onto structural features which neither she nor her grandparents can be held responsible for. She explains her anger at her grandparents as arising primarily from a conflict based on age differences: she considers older people to be judgmental and over-protective. In her

explanation of this conflict, Rita shows some acceptance of her grandparents' position. Rita's grandmother, Marjorie (69), similarly draws attention to generational differences in terms of parenting rules:

> *I don't think most grandmothers have to fully parent their grandchildren. And you know, they don't have to worry about making rules for them or anything like that. Mind you, my rules are much much less. I find it so difficult to know in terms of where to draw the line because we're two generations apart - that's a lot, it really is a lot and times have changed so terribly so, even when you bring up children, it's very hard to know like how strict, without going over the line, to be.*

Here Marjorie draws on the generational difference in order to address decisions that she must make in terms of parenting Rita, thus providing an explanation for why there may at times be conflict or disagreement between them over rules.

While she no longer lives with her grandmother, Jazz was partly raised by her grandmother, as her mother was only fourteen when she got pregnant. Both Jazz and her grandmother Sandy talked about the relationship as being like that of a second parent, and both drew on age and generation effects in order to negotiate this relationship.

> Jazz (18): *...when I was younger I'd listen to my mom more than I'd listen to my grandmother. I never listened to my grandmother. Now it's just, I'd say the only difference is my mom, since she's, maybe because she's young, she understands me, I'm a teenager you know, she was a teenager not too long ago and like I said, my grandma's more old fashioned so she's just like "well study your works" and she call me and say "Jazz have you done your homework." Yes Sandy. Or I'll say no I don't have any homework, I did my work at school and she'll be like "You should bring your books any way home and study your books" (laughter) and my mom's like "ok, your homework's done, your homework's done." Just her being a little old fashioned, that's the only difference [between her grandmother and her mother].*

For Jazz, characterizing Sandy as old and old-fashioned allowed her to dismiss Sandy's discipline and to do things that her grandmother would not approve of, without destroying their relationship. Jazz especially draws on generational differences to explain conflict between them: "she grew up in the '40s and I grew up in the '90s and they're two completely different times."

While Jazz focuses on generational differences to explain aspects of her relationship with Sandy, Sandy (63) draws on discourses of adolescence. Explaining why she does not see Jazz quite as often as she used to, she says "Of course, you know teenagers—they find things to do where they are so, but I try to talk to her every now and then." Sandy also reflects on how Jazz positions

them both in terms of age in order to deflect Sandy's advice: "And you know like when I try to talk with her, she lets me know that this is a different age. 'Sandy, you're old, you're old now, I'm young.'" (Laughs). Both Sandy and Jazz talk of their love for one another and want to maintain a strong connection. They do so, in part, through drawing on age and generational differences (rather than, for instance, personality deficits) to explain their conflict and thus to preserve this connection.

Grandmothers and their adolescent granddaughters draw on and naturalize age-based expectations and stereotypes that would at first seem to separate them, to contextualize the others' behaviours and thus to connect positively. While they draw on discourses of adolescence and aging, there seems to be a sophistication to this process that is quite different from the blunt use of stereotypes to discuss grandmothers and adolescents in general. Thus age and generational differences do not act as barriers to connection but rather are highlighted and deployed in order to deflect conflict. These negotiations were particularly strong in two custodial relationships where there were tensions resulting from the grandparents' parenting roles and possibly extended exposure to each others' failings, preventing the relationship from being idealized. By deflecting criticism in this way, perhaps a positive connection with the grandmothers *as grandmothers* (rather than parents) could be maintained.

Conclusion

The closeness of a grandparenting relationship is often the result of decisions made by the intervening generation (Matthews & Sprey, 1985) and many other social-structural features, including culture, age of grandparents and grandchildren, maternal or paternal lineage, proximity, and gender. Generational segregation and stereotypes would seem to prevent connection between grandparents and their adolescent grandchildren, and yet there are also aspects of being an adolescent and of aging that suggest common bonds. While these relationships are shaped by structural, familial and discursive pushes and pulls, grandparents and teenage grandchildren make choices about the extent to which they pursue a connection. Many participate in these relationships as active agents that choose to build links. To build such links, my participants drew on social tools, such as stereotypes or age norms, to negotiate the relationship and to contextualize the others' behaviours. More generally, findings suggest that how we build our relationships often draws positively on difference. At the same time, these observations are exploratory, based on a fairly small number of interviews in which the focus was not primarily on grandparent-grandchild relations. A deeper investigation of such connections, including interviews with grandparents and grandchildren together, could explore these issues further: are there patterns behind stereotyping beyond what I have observed here? How are custodial relationships different from non-custodial ones? Also, what is the gendered nature of grandparenting relationships?

References

Aldous, J. 1995. "New Views of Grandparents in Intergenerational Context." *Journal of Family Issues* 16: 104-122.

Baranowski, M. D. 1982. "Grandparent-Adolescent Relations: Beyond the Nuclear Family." *Adolescence* 17: 573-584.

Bengston, V. L., & Robertson, J. F. Eds. 1985. *Grandparenthood.* Beverly Hills: Sage.

Berger, P. L., & Luckman, T. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Systematic Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* New York: Anchor.

Boon, S. D. & Brussoni, M. J. 1996. "Young Adults' Relationships with Their 'Closest' Grandparents: Examining Emotional Closeness." *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality* 11: 439-458.

Brussoni, M. J. & Boon, S. D. 1998. "Grandparental Impact in Young Adults' Relationships with Their Closest Grandparents: the Role of Relationship Strength and Emotional Closeness." *Journal of Aging and Human Development.* 45: 267-286.

Burton, L. M. 1996. "Age Norms, the Timing of Family Role Transitions, and Intergenerational Caregiving Among Aging African American Women." *The Gerontologist.* 36:199-208.

Burton, L. M. 1987. "Young Grandmothers: Are they Ready?" *Social Science* 72: 191-194.

Calasanti, T. M., & Slevin, K. F. 2001. *Gender, Social Inequalities, and Aging.* Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.

Cherlin, A., & Furstenberg, F. F., Jr. 1985. "Styles and Strategies of Grandparenting." V. L. Bengston & J.F. Robertson, Eds. *Grandparenthood.* Beverly Hills: Sage. 97-116.

Connidis, I. A. 2001. *Family Ties and Aging.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Di Leonardo, M. 1987. "The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12: 440-453.

Fuller-Thomson, E., & Minkler, M. 2000. "America's Grandparent Caregivers: Who Are They?" B. Hayslip, Jr. & R. Goldberg-Glen, eds. *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Theoretical, Empirical, and Clinical Perspectives.* New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc. 3-22.

Goodman, C., & Silverstein, M. 2001. "Grandparents Who Parent Their Grandchildren: An Exploratory Study of Close Relations Across Three Generations." *Journal of Family Issues* 22: 557-578.

Griffin, C. 1993. *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hanks, R. S. 2001. "'Grandma, What Big Teeth Youth Have!'" The Social Construction of Grandparenting in American Business and Academe." *Journal of Family Issues* 22: 652-676.

Hirsch, B. J., M. Mickus & Boerger, R. 2002. "Ties to Influential Adults Among Black and White Adolescents: Culture, Social, Class and Family Networks." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30: 289-303.

Hockey, J, and Allison, J. 1993. *Growing Up and Growing Old: Ageing and Dependency in the Life Course.* London: Sage Publications.

Hodgson, L. G. 1992. "Adult Grandchildren and their Grandparents: The Enduring Bond." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 34: 209-225.

Hurme, H. 1997. "Cross-Cultural Differences in Adolescents' Perceptions of their Grandparents." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 44: 221-253.

Johnson, C. L. 1983. "A Cultural Analysis of the Grandmother." *Research on Aging* 5: 547-567.

Lesko, N. 1996. "Denaturalizing Adolescence: The Politics of Contemporary Representations." *Youth and Society* 28: 139-161

Matthews, S. H. & Sprey, J. 1985. "Adolescents' Relationships with Grandparents: An Empirical Contribution to Conceptual Clarification." *Journal of Gerontology* 40: 621-626.

Mueller, M. M., Wilhelm, B. & Elder, Jr., G. H. 2002. "Variations in Grandparenting." *Research on Aging* 24: 360-388.

Raby, Rebecca. 2002. "A Tangle of Discourses: Girls Negotiating Adolescence." *Journal of Youth Studies* 5: 425-448.

Roberto, K., & Stroes, J. 1992. "Grandchildren and Grandparents' Roles, Influences and Relationships." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development.* 34: 227-239.

Rossi, A. & Rossi, P. 1990. *Of Human Bonding: Parent-Child Relations Across the Life Course.* New York: de Gruyter.

Saluter, A.F. 1996. "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1994." *Current Population Reports* (Series P20-484: A-7). Washington D.C. United States Government Printing Office.

Sokolovsky, J. Ed. 1997. *The Cultural Context of Aging: Worldwide Perspectives.* Second Edition. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin and Garvey.

Szinovacz, M. E. 1998. "Grandparents Today: A Demographic Profile." *The Gerontologist* 38: 37-52,

Thomas, J. L. & Datan, N. 1985. "Themes of Stability and Change in Grandparenting." *Contributions to Human Development* 14: 86-92.

Troll, L. E. 1980. "Grandparenting." *Aging in the 1980s: Psychological Issues.* L.W. Poon, ed. Washington: APA. 475-481.

Van Ranst, N., K. Verschueren & Marcoen, A. 1995. "The Meaning of Grandparents as Viewed by Adolescent Grandchildren: An Empirical Study in Belgium." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 41: 311-324.

Serena Patterson

"This is So You Know You Have Options"

Lesbian Grandmothers and the Mixed Legacies of Nonconformity

Lesbian grandmothers in Canada represent a unique cohort in terms of their place in lesbian history. Forced to either hide their identity or adopt very unconventional family patterns and roles in the mid- to late-twentieth century, they now find themselves with a considerable degree of acceptance, assimilating into mainstream society and active as grandparents. Lesbian grandmothers explore the mixed legacies o nonconformance and of assimilation, along with their hopes that grandchildren will enjoy the benefits of a more diverse society.

I am greeted with surprise when I say that I am studying lesbian grandmothers. As far as the mainstream media knew, the "gay-by boom" began in the late 1980s, and lesbian culture just a few years before that. We are certain that women loving women have always existed, under many names and guises.[1] Yet for lesbians who came of age between 1950 and 1985, there were no celebrity role models, no legal protections, and few words to even name what it was to love women and to also desire children. The path of becoming one of today's lesbian grandmothers has required creativity, courage and risk. As one lesbian grandmother, Nancy, wrote to me,

> *Most of us came of age during a time when being a lesbian was considered sick, perverted and quite dangerous. Even though some women (young and old) still choose to be closeted, my age-group and those older have had some incredible journeys which are still evolving.*

My purpose in this paper is to explore some of the legacies of these "incredible journeys," the losses, the gifts, and the hopes that lesbian grandmothers hold out toward their children and grandchildren.

Methodology

In the spring of 2004, I sent to lesbian friends and list serves a request for participants in a study on Canadian lesbian grandmothers. Through forwards and referrals, I received 14 completed questionnaires, mostly from Vancouver Island, Vancouver, and the greater Toronto area. In early August, 2005 I met with six lesbian grandmothers, all living within the Comox Valley area of Vancouver Island, for in-depth discussions of some of the issues raised by the questionnaire study (Patterson, 2005), and to gather reactions to Bill C-38.[2] One couple met me alone; the other four, all of whom knew one another, met in a group for informal discussion. Two of these six women had participated in the questionnaire study.

The 18 study participants ranged in age from 41 to 73, with most between the ages of 55 and 65. Fourteen were grandmothers through their biological children; four became step-grandmothers through the children of a lesbian partner. Twelve were in committed lesbian relationships, and of these, all but two shared the grandparent role with their partners. Ten wished to be named as sources; eight chose to be anonymous. I have referred to all participants by either actual or fictional first names, and have listed the named sources in my acknowledgements.

Compulsory heterosexuality

None of these women grew up in a time or place where claiming a lesbian identity would have been supported. Girls were channeled into heterosexual marriage through a life-long training process, the absence of visible alternatives, and messages about dire consequences (poverty, social exclusion, loss of children, violence) that awaited those who refused to conform (Rich, 1983). While 1970s gay liberation and feminist movements may have carved out places of lesbian culture and community, these were far removed from most of the women in my study. Lack of custody rights (Arnup, 1995), negative social stigma (King & Black, 1999), economic challenges, fear of alienating one's children, love for husbands, and internalized homophobia created fierce barriers to coming out during their child-rearing years.

By far the most common way of coping with these pressures was to marry. Twelve of the 14 biological mothers had their children within traditional heterosexual marriages, and most of these women did not identify as lesbians until the mid-1980's or later, when their children were teenagers or adults. Although some of these women identified as having "always been a rebel", or even as having been closeted lesbians, the dominant strategy was to blend in. For most (but not all) of these women, coming out in middle or late adulthood was experienced as both an accomplishment of authenticity and a liberation from ill-fitting roles.

A second, less common response to the pressure of heterosexual conformity was to resist marriage and motherhood. The three step-grandmothers (those who came to the grandmother role through their partner's children) had

not expected to be mothers, but relished the grandmother role with their partner's children. Even years after breaking up with the biological grandmother one lesbian step-grandmother stated that "being a grandmother is as central to me as being a lesbian or a feminist."

One biological mother did not raise her child, but arranged a semi-open adoption within her extended family. I do not know how common it is for this cohort of older lesbian women to have birthed and given up children for adoption. Given an aversion to heterosexual marriage, and the difficulty of obtaining an abortion in Canada through the 1970s, I suspect that many lesbians over 50 paid for their freedom by surrendering children for adoption. Of these, some have found and re-constructed a relationship with their biological children, which then allows them to be grandmothers to the third generation.

The third, and probably least common strategy was to live more or less openly as a lesbian mother within a supportive counter-cultural community. Jane accomplished this within a rural land collective. Hers was the only child within the study who grew up with two women whom he knew equally as mothers, and who knew from childhood that his mother was a lesbian. "Oh, we were pioneers, all right!" she exclaims with obvious pride and some amusement. Her early identification as a lesbian was supported by the cooperation of her child's biological father, as well as others within her immediate surroundings.

Creating families "outside the box"

Since their identification as lesbians, each of the women have become, like Jane, pioneers in constructing nontraditional families. Some of their families look conventional at first glance, but for the fact that they are headed by two women. Others continue to be pioneers in many aspects of their lives, including spirituality and political activism. The creation and nurturing of families and of communities are themes that run through the narratives of these women; connection is very important.

But the freedom to create family and community on one's own terms often came at a heavy price. Ties, even to one's own children, were tested and sometimes broken by the coming out process. The majority of participants spoke or wrote of times when they were estranged or on very strained terms with one or more children. Since it was not uncommon for these women to leave their heterosexual marriages in order to be with a woman lover, the mothers' coming out and the breakup of the first families were simultaneous events in the eyes of many of the children, and therefore doubly resented. Betty describes her childrens' reaction to her leaving to be with Diane:

> *My youngest daughter realized even before I left that Diane was a threat. She raged at Diane on the phone and in person. She believed that Diane had taken away her mother, and wrecked the marriage, which [she] thought had been perfect. We had just had our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, and*

[all of the children] had taken pictures and made a video. I hadn't known that things were not okay, so how would they have known?

Diane had been clearer about the need to end a marriage that was stagnant and unhappy. Her coming out was separate from her leaving the marriage, but that did not stop the children from feeling defensive toward their mother's emerging lesbian identity.

The children had a second round of backlash when I came out.... Leaving [their] dad because he was an SOB was fine, but to leave because I "cheated" (Diane motions with quotation marks in the air) was bad. They were angry because I had "hidden" something from them, even though I had only known for six weeks! I think my kids would have cheered if I had left "properly" with a man.

For Betty and Diane, who between them have several grown children and stepchildren, the reunions have come gradually and one at a time. In a series of rich anecdotes, they took me on a tour of more than a dozen close family relationships, each with its own unique story of temporary disconnection and reunion.

In some cases, the relationships are now much stronger for the experience. Many of Diane's family members have acknowledged that Diane's coming out and her relationship to Betty have enriched them. In a family that has suffered from generations of alcoholism, Diane and Betty are held up to the young as models of "being true to oneself," and of the possibilities of healthy relationships. Recently, Diane's brother thanked her, in the presence of over 100 relatives at a family reunion, for "what you [two] bring to this family".

But not all the family ties were strengthened. Diane has a daughter-in-law who is "very homophobic," and who forbids all except the most superficial contact between Diane and the children. Betty's children are individually supportive of the relationship, but her immigration to Canada to be with Diane cost them the hub of their connection with one another. Geographically close, they had nonetheless thoroughly depended upon Betty's skill to bring them together for gatherings, to monitor family news and to provide child-care and parenting support. Since Betty's native country does not recognize same-sex relationships as a basis for immigration, the two settled in Canada. Both Betty and her children mourn this loss. And while she does not regret the changes in her life, she also acknowledges the losses that those changes have brought. She reflects:

Is the prize worth the price? For Diane, it's clearly a yes. Everybody ultimately won, including her kids, grandkids, and extended family. Even the cranky husband ended up better off.... But for me, well, it's a shift in my life, and a shift in the kids' lives. There is still a lot of loss around it. I miss

> *a lot of what I had with my kids and grandkids; the little community that we had.*

For Elinor, the re-creation of family with a son that she didn't raise is a work in progress. As the child was raised by relatives, he was not told that he was adopted and that Elinor was his biological mother until his cousins "spilled the beans" when he was twelve. The adoptive parents disapproved of Elinor's lifestyle, and tried to keep contact "very restricted". At the age of 16, the son came to stay with Elinor and her partner for a few weeks, and the reunion was far from smooth. In his early 20s, he is now living with the mother of his two children, the firstborn of which is being raised by the people who raised him. Elinor is optimistic that his determination to raise the second child, a daughter, will help him to "settle down" and also provide a stronger basis of connection between her and the young family. Ironically, Elinor and her son's common status as family outsiders may be helping to draw them together.

> *[At 16, my son] was very violent, aggressive, misogynist, and full of the crap he was carrying; it was very difficult.... I think my being a lesbian witch has helped me to be able to have a relationship with him, past all his aggressive stuff.... It's been unbelievably hard.... When I would see him as a kid, I always gave him an extra big smile and hug, because he was the identified problem child since birth. So he loves me because he needs someone who accepts him.*

Still, Elinor recognizes that her being a lesbian has also, indirectly, made it difficult in the past to see and connect to her son. Like Betty, Elinor expresses some loss along with the positive aspects of identifying as a lesbian.

> *I took the feelings of the people raising my son into account, and weighed that above my son's needs [to know me]. I backed off, and deprived him of something that he needed, and I will never forgive myself for that.*

Many of the women see their struggles as the normal struggles of parenting teenagers, or of parenting in the aftermath of divorce. They recognize that children often reject step-parents, choose sides with fathers, or simply declare their mothers to be hopelessly embarrassing. It is not, they insist, mainly homophobia on the part of the children that comes between them in the post-coming out years. But the context of societal homophobia can sometimes give an acceptable or sympathy-inducing cover to the more common experience of wanting to push one's mother away. Other family members, too, sometimes have their own reasons for using a kind of opportunistic homophobia to justify or to create distance.

While the socially sanctioned freedom of family members to reject or exclude lesbians creates some level of insecurity, it is also true that the freedom

to chose one's connections cuts both ways. Lesbians may also choose or reject family members, depending upon how they are treated and what possibilities they see for healthy connection. Elinor spoke of the flexibility to choose one's ties as a strength:

> *Because I don't have a very defined role, I can choose whether to be in or out [of my son's family]. I choose to be in.*

Jane cautioned that not all lesbians are bravely nonconforming, and not all heterosexuals are conformists living within the safety of defined family roles. Still, she reflected that a "particularly wide variety of family configurations" is part of the lesbian or queer subculture, and that this proliferation of family forms and relationships enriches society in subversive ways. At this point in the conversation, participants rushed to complete one another's sentences

> Jane: *If there is something about lesbian families, it is that the family configuration is more complex—*
>
> Elinor: *and the commonality of that in the lesbian culture; I love that. "Family" doesn't mean what it used to—*
>
> Martha: *but it's still family. My father put [Christina's daughter] in his will the other day, saying, "well, she's my grandchild....*
>
> Jane: *we have all these questions that we have to answer consciously, like, "when we change partners, are we still parents to that partner's children?" We have to decide ...*
>
> Martha: ... *but this makes those bonds insecure; if just one person doesn't agree that we have that relationship, then we may lose that tie. The least invested person calls the shots....*
>
> Jane: ... *but it also makes for creativity...*
>
> Martha: ... *For me, it's not just my choice. Me, Christina, Matti (Christina's daughter) and the kids; if any of us choose for me not to be a grandmother, then I can't be. It really depends upon a whole network agreeing that this is my role and that I belong here ....*

All of the women actively work at this network. Betty repeatedly presents herself to a reluctant step-son-in-law with the command, "I'm your mother-in-law; hug me." On both sides of their large clan, Betty and Diane have stories of how, through charm, persistence, generosity, and the pressure of more accepting family members taking leadership roles, they have won the some-

times grudging acceptance, even admiration, of one another's children. Jane became closer to her partner's children during the partner's three-year losing battle with cancer. Still, Jane's place in the life of her partner's children has become clear only with the passage of time after her partner's death. She has recently been invited to sit at the "family table" at the wedding of her partner's son. "I'm thrilled", she says, "But I didn't take for granted that it would be this way." Christina insisted that she and Martha host the wedding anniversary party for her parents, reasoning that "it was the only way that I could be certain that Martha would be invited." A place in the family of one's partner, in particular, is more earned than given among these women, and many of them count that place as a noteworthy achievement.

Language sometimes fails these women when it comes to describing or labeling family ties. Jane—whose son describes himself as "an only child with 16 siblings!"—says,

> *I was with Tamara from the time my son was five, and we never differentiated who was the mom. He didn't know who was the mom until one of the kids told him. We didn't call ourselves mom; we were Jane and Tamara.... Then with Kim's (her deceased partner's) children, it is more comfortable for me to say "this is my partner's child" than "this is my step-child"; it's more exact. If I say he's my step-child, they will think that I'm her ex-husband's wife.*
>
> *Buying a sheepskin, I was asked, "is this your first grandchild?" and I said, "no, but it is my first biological grandchild." Then he said, "what does that mean?" and I thought, I don't want to go into this; it could take an hour!*

Martha says, "I get jealous of Christina because it is so easy for her to talk about her grandchildren in any context, without having to come out as a lesbian."

Gifts and burdens

Other than through the denial of contact, none of the women in the study indicated that they believed that their grandchildren would be harmed or disadvantaged by having a lesbian grandmother. The feeling was unanimous that, to the degree that they were allowed to be grandmothers, they had much to offer the children.

To some degree, this is perceived to be the gift of all involved grandmothers. As more than one respondent wrote, "a grandmother is a grandmother"; being a lesbian does not necessarily make them extra special. This reasoning was particularly strong among the women who had not revealed their lesbianism to their grandchildren. These women gave the parents of their grandchildren total control over whether or when the grandchildren would know about their grandmothers being lesbian, and they did not worry out loud about the

cost of this silence to the richness of their connection.[3] Some were grateful to have any connection at all with grandchildren whose parents were openly homophobic, and took particular pains to be discreet in order to avoid offense.

Still, a majority of participants (14 of 18) believed that having a lesbian grandmother included some special gifts. This came through most clearly in the in-depth group interview, where the women invited and encouraged one another to reflect upon themselves as role models. The clear consensus was one of pride over having modeled self-acceptance and self-direction, and presented to their children a picture of successful non-conformity. Elinor says, "I strive to be a bad example in all of the best ways. I think that is my job." Martha agrees enthusiastically.

> *I totally think that [choice] is the benefit of having a lesbian grandmother. When Jake was born I took him in my arms in the hospital, and I said, 'This is so you know that there are options. You have more choices than what it looks like.' I am so glad that there are queers in the world.*

Several participants expressed faith that their grandchildren would not have the same struggles with prejudice and homophobia that had marked the grandmothers' early lives. For example, Linda writes:

> *Joey is being raised by a very open minded woman, and having a lesbian grandmother will open that door sooner. It will be easier for her to learn about homosexuality and how natural it is without having to face the barrage of homophobia before she is old enough to make her own decisions.*

More common was the belief that the grandchildren would have an advantage when it came to developing compassion and acceptance toward all of human diversity, and that this would make life easier or richer for them in a globalized society. Arlene writes:

> *In a global world that is becoming more diverse locally, helping young people to accept gender choices as well as mixtures of all kinds seems important to me.... We socialize around holidays and special events with all the other grandmas and grandpas [and cousins], many of whom are multi-racial adoptees. So we're pretty much just a part of a polyglot mixture, it seems, for these grandkids!*

A number of women commented upon how their own compassion, understanding, acceptance or horizons had grown as a result of having come out. Diane, whose grandchildren knew her both before and after coming out, says:

> *We went to my granddaughter's graduation, and she was just beaming to*

> *everybody, "this is my grandma!" They get a kick out of it. And also I'm nicer, more relaxed, better than I used to be. I don't have a chip on my shoulder any more, and they see that. I'm more sure of myself. I'm a real and whole person to them; much more of a person. That didn't happen until I was "gay".*

Comments on Bill C-38

Bill C-38 is a landmark for these women, who faced extreme homophobic prejudice during the years when they were raising families. Yet, because they experienced this prejudice as both a hardship and an impetus toward personal creativity and achievement, it is hardly surprising that they greet Bill C-38 with somewhat mixed feelings.

The lesbian and gay rights movement in Canada has long held conflicting goals of assimilation and acceptance by mainstream society on the one hand, and goals of challenging and changing that society on the other. On the surface, Bill C-38 appears to be an assimilationist victory. It guarantees lesbians the right to form marriages, just like heterosexuals can do. To lesbians who have defined relationships on their own terms, and who rejected the traditional view of marriage as patriarchal or limiting, Bill C-38 appears to offer a right that they don't want, in exchange for a renewed expectation that they should, after all, get married and be "normal"—something that they rejected long ago.

On the other hand, even women who did not want to marry expressed an appreciation for the increased social acceptance of lesbian relationships. There is hope that as lesbians and gay men marry (or don't marry), they will challenge, expand, and perhaps improve options for all people, gay and straight alike.

Betty and Diane were married in the wake of the BC Supreme Court decision legalizing same sex-marriage in 2003. Both women value family bonds strongly, and have been highly identified as mothers and kin-keepers for all of their adult lives. Both take pride in voting and participating in the country's formal political processes. They are unambiguously thrilled over Bill C-38. Being married allows them both to feel more secure with one another, and to proudly claim their relationship in terms that the broader society, and their extended families, understand.

Martha and Christina, on the other hand, have never wanted to marry, despite being intensely committed to one another and to shared family life. Their political activism has been largely outside of the formal system of political parties and parliaments; they have joined peace and environmental demonstrations, and are more at home in the counter-cultural circles of Wiccan spirituality than in the more conventional (although they might say equally important) halls of the United Church or the Liberal Party. But they, too, have found themselves welcoming Bill C-38, because it has marked a change in the way they perceive themselves to be treated and welcomed, in their families and communities.

When I asked Martha, Christina, Jane and Elinor about the impact of Bill

C-38, the conversation again quickened and they completed one another's thoughts.

> Martha: *Christina and I don't want to get married; never wanted to. I spent some time wondering whether I wanted to sign the petition [for Bill C-38]. But I have found that something has changed in the way we are treated. We are more accepted. We're Canadians. We're legal.*
>
> Christina: *The same people who did not invite me to Martha's parents' fiftieth [anniversary party] have now found out that all of their close friends have gay people in their families—children or grandchildren. And they are much more comfortable now.*
>
> Martha: *I think it's that old thing, "if you had a gay child, too, then it must not have been something that I did wrong." There is healing in [acknowledging gay family members]. For all kinds of people.*
>
> Jane: *The loss about Bill C-38 is the loss of creativity; we are being fit into a box that we didn't create.... We are glad for the acceptance, but not to be put in the box. We want to expand heterosexuality, create more diversity within that model, but we don't want to come into it. I don't want to appear like we think we are better than straight culture, but I want to be who I am.*
>
> Elinor: *It's like, maybe this will help us to have more access to our grandchildren; make our ties more secure because they are publicly recognized. But part of the reason why that is important is because of what we stand for, outside of the box. So, we don't want to give up the best thing we have to offer, for the right to offer it.*
>
> Martha: *But we do want to be there. And this makes that easier.*
>
> Jane: *As long as we don't forget who we are.*

All in all, these are women who look to the future with unusual optimism. They are amused and envious of younger lesbians, whom they see flaunting what had to be hidden just a short generation ago. Diane says:

> *These new kids have the world by the tail; they are so lucky. For them, well that could have been us ... I would have had a career, a family, and a woman. I think I knew at 15 but I pushed it away. But if it had been like it is now, no shit, I'd have been out like k. d. lang.*

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of study participants: Donna Edwards, Nancy Emkin, Jill Hampson, Arlene Trustham, Judith Evans, Liz

Turner, Sharon Haave, B. Braude, Diane Howell, Betty Howell and eight others. Also, many thanks to Monika Grünberg for her assistance.

[1]See, for example, Lillian Faderman's classic *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* (1991).
[2]Canada's Same Sex Marriage law, passed July 19, 2005.
[3]Perhaps they would have revealed more in a face to face interview; the questionnaire did not necessarily elicit deep relationship dynamics. On the other hand, a minority of the women seem to have continued to hold quite conventional, formal roles within their families. For these women, coming out to grandchildren was seen as not necessary and perhaps not appropriate to the grandmother-grandchild relationship.

References

Arnup, Katherine. 1995. "Living in the Margins: Lesbian Families and the Law." *Lesbian Parenting: Living with Pride and Prejudice.* Katherine Arnup, ed. Charlottetown, PEI: Gynergy Books: 378-398.

Faderman, Lillian. 1991. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America.* New York: Columbia University Press.

King, Beverly and Black, Katherine. 1999. "Extent of Relational Stigmatization of Lesbians and their Children by Heterosexual College Students." *Journal of Homosexuality.* 37 (2): 65-81.

Patterson, Serena, 2005. "Better One's Own Path: The Experience of Lesbian Grandmothers in Canada." *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 24 (2,3): 118-122.

Rich, Adrienne. 1983. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Powers of Desire.* Ann Snitow, ed. New York: Monthly Review Press: 177-205.

Katrin Kriz

How Grandmothers Become "Second Moms"

Family Policies and Grandmothering in Britain, Germany and Sweden

This article analyzes how British, German and Swedish family policies, especially leave programs and access to publicly subsidized childcare services, influence the involvement of grandmothers in the care of preschool-age children. This study, which seeks to extend feminist analyses of the welfare state and sociological studies on working families, draws on in-depth interviews with one hundred parents conducted in London, "Stromfels," Germany, and Stockholm from 1999 to 2001. First, this article discusses the main differences in family policies in Britain, Germany and Sweden. Second, it shows that grandmothers provide a substantial amount of childcare in working class families in London and Stromfels, but not in Stockholm. Third, this article shows that especially in London, "second moms" fill parents' need for affordable, trustworthy childcare after mothers return to work. "Second moms" also provide a financial and emotional safety net for their daughters and their grandchildren. Fourth, this article discusses how British and to a lesser extent German family policies increase the demand for "second moms" compared to Swedish family policies, which reduce the demand for and supply of childcare by "second moms." I conclude by suggesting that different kinds of family policies, in combination with economic and cultural forces, may produce different kinds of families.

This article explores how family policies affect the decision of employed parents in Britain, Germany and Sweden to involve grandmothers in the care of children younger than seven years. The term "family policies" here refers to government-sponsored family policies such as maternity and parental leave, the provision of publicly subsidized childcare services, and tax deductions or cash benefits for children and childcare. The primary goal of this article is to analyze how different kinds of family policies in interplay with cultural and economic forces influence the extent to which grandmothers are substantially

involved in children's care. It also highlights the large amount of care work[1] that grandmothers in countries such as Britain and Germany undertake and shows that in Sweden, grandmothers are also involved in caring for young children, but not to the large extent as grandmothers in Britain and Germany.

Previous research has shown that low-income families in Britain and Germany rely on childcare by relatives and friends more so than families with higher incomes (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Rerrich, 1996; Spiess, Büchel & Frick, 2002; Ward, Dale & Joshi, 1996). For instance, Julia Brannen and Peter Moss (1991), who studied dual-earner couples with children in London in the mid 1980s, discovered that working class families relied on kin networks for childcare to a large extent because of their lack of financial resources and the closer-knit network structures of working class families.

Similarly, Maria Rerrich's (1996) study found that working class Bavarian families with preschoolers and children in primary school largely relied on unpaid childcare by extended kin. By contrast, middle class families paid for childcare and support services provided by working class women, immigrant women, or women who were not German citizens. Katharina Spiess, Felix Büchel and Joachim Frick (2002) found that in West Germany in 2000, 31.6 percent of children younger than three years were cared for by relatives other than parents on a regular basis, and 36 percent of children aged three to six years were in the regular care of relatives.

At the outset of the larger research project of which this article is a part, I drew on the research cited above to hypothesize that the childcare choices parents make and their experiences with their care arrangements would vary considerably by social class. Social class is measured here by household income, occupation, and education level. I further expected parents' choices and experiences to differ by country, given the differences between British, German and Swedish family policies. This expectation was grounded in the literature on welfare regimes[2] by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999), and above all, in the feminist analyses of welfare states by Jane Jenson (1997), Jane Lewis (1992, 1993), Ann Orloff (1993), Ilona Ostner (1993, 1994, 2003), and Diane Sainsbury (1994, 1999). However, these analyses, which focus on the gendered aspects of welfare regimes, do not examine their impact on people's everyday lives.[3] This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature on welfare regimes by studying how welfare regimes relate to grandmothers' everyday lives.[4]

First, I discuss the research methods employed in this study. Second, I highlight the main differences between British, German and Swedish family policies. Third, I describe the extent of grandmothers' care involvement in my sample, and parents' views on why they decided to involve grandmothers in the care of preschool-age children. Finally, I will discuss how family policies influence parents' decisions to rely on grandmothers as childcare providers. I will tease out how British and German, but not Swedish, family policies help produce families in which grandmothers act as caregivers for children between two and five entire days per week.

Research methods

This article draws on one hundred, in-depth semi-structured interviews I conducted with parents in London, Stockholm, and Stromfels, a city of circa 200,000 inhabitants in Germany's *Land* of Baden-Württemberg between November 1999 and March 2001.[5] I conducted these interviews with the goal of learning about parents' views on family policies and their experiences with childcare arrangements. I decided on a cross-country comparison, as a comparative approach allowed me to tease out the role that different policy contexts play in parents' childcare choices. I chose Britain, Germany and Sweden as the cases for my study, as these countries represent different types of welfare regimes.

I conducted research in London, Stromfels and Stockholm mostly for practical reasons. In each research site, I located respondents in teaching and research hospitals. I recruited interviewees from different social class backgrounds because I wanted to investigate how family policies affect parents with different education levels, occupations, and incomes. Table 1 presents key information about the demographic characteristics of my samples.

Family policies

Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss British, German and Swedish family policy in detail, I will focus on the policy differences that most influence parents' decisions to choose grandmothers as their grandchildren's caregivers. The policies that matter most are leave policies and the provision of publicly-funded childcare services (family childcare and daycare) for children younger than three years. In short, in comparison to Swedish and German family policies, British family policies are the least generous in terms of the duration and benefits of maternity and parental leave, and the provision of publicly subsidized childcare services for preschoolers. The British leave program is the shortest (three months) and least generous, while Germany provides the longest leave (three years), but the leave program is not as generous as the Swedish one: in Sweden in 2000, parents were entitled to a leave of 18 months, 15 months of which were paid at 80 percent of the income of the parent on leave (up to a certain income threshold) (Försäkringskassan, 2000).

With regard to publicly-subsidized and thus inexpensive childcare services, the German state's involvement in the provision of childcare services for children younger than three years is similarly low as in Britain. In (West) Germany in 2000, 3.6 percent of children younger than three years, and 77 percent of children aged three years to compulsory school age were in publicly funded daycare (Spiess *et al.*, 2002). In Britain, the percentages were 2 percent for (1993) and 58 percent (for 2000) respectively (Department for Employment and Education, 2000; European Commission, 1995). In Sweden in 1994, 33 percent of children aged 0 to three years and 78 percent of the older age group were in publicly funded daycare (Skolverket, 1998).

Most significantly, the short leave period in Britain relative to Germany

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of study samples

Variable	London	Stockholm	Stromfels
Working Class Backgrounds	37%	36%	52%
Two parent households	88.8%	76%	81.5%
Single parent households	11.1%	24%	18.5%
Households with child under seven years[1]	100%	96%	96.2%
Average number of children per family	1.7	2.0	1.7
Average age of children (months)[2]	31	47	49
Racial group: White	82%	97.2%	96%
Racial group: Black	9%	2.8%	4%
Racial group: Other	9%	0%	0%
Gender of interviewee	71%	75%	61%
Mothers active in formal labor market employment	81%	96%	85%
Mothers employed part-time[3]	59%	46%	74%
Average part-time hours worked by mothers	20	30	18
Total number of households:	27	25	27

[1]Except for two families, all the parents I interviewed had a child younger than seven years at the time of the interview. The two exceptions were one single mother in Stromfels who had an eight year-old child, and one single mother in Stockholm whose youngest child was seven years old.

[2]These figures only include children who were younger than seven years-old.

[3]Part-time employment is defined as less than 35 hours per week.

and Sweden, combined with a relative lack of publicly subsidized childcare services for children younger than three years means that employed mothers in Britain face the widest gap with regard to childcare once they return to work. The same holds true for those mothers in Germany who return to work before their leave period ends and who cannot afford to or do not want to hire family childcare providers, au pairs or nannies. In Sweden, employed mothers do not face such childcare gaps because of the long paid leave period and easily accessible, inexpensive daycare or family childcare.

Second mom families

In London and Stromfels, grandmothers provided a significant amount of childcare after children ceased being in parents' full-time care, which typically happened once their leave period had ended. This was not the case in Stockholm. In Sweden, grandmothers took care of children when parents went out, when daycare centers were closed for holidays, or when parents wanted their children to be picked up from daycare earlier so they did not have to spend the entire day there.

In the following, I will describe the families in which grandmothers undertake childcare for more than two (12 hour) days per week on a regular basis. I will henceforth refer to these grandmothers as "second moms." In seven out of the 27 London households (26 percent) and four out of the 27 Stromfels households (15 percent), second moms were children's exclusive caregivers while a parent or parents' were at work.

On the one hand, I call these grandmothers second moms, because many parents in London and Stromfels used this term to refer to grandmothers who provided such a significant amount of childcare. The numeral "second" also connotes that these women become mothers more than once during their lives, at a time when other women and men are full-time retirees, still employed, or full-time homemakers. The term "second mom" does not refer to those grandmothers who provided temporary childcare support, for instance when daycare centers were closed for holidays, when children got sick and needed to stay home from daycare, when care providers got sick, or when parents went out in the evenings or on weekends. It also does not include grandmothers who were part of a patchwork of different caregivers (see Thorne, 1999) in which grandmothers cared for children less than 24 hours per week.[6]

In the following, I mainly focus on the gender and class dynamics of second mom families because they are crucial to understanding how grandmothers become second moms. It is important to write about families rather than individuals to stress that this is a family formation different from nuclear families, families headed by solo mothers, or extended families in which grandmothers are not necessarily involved in childcare to such a substantial degree. I also want to emphasize that this is a family type that exists in Britain and Germany, whereas it is virtually nonexistent in Sweden, for reasons I will discuss later.

As indicated by the above-mentioned previous research, the class dynamics of the overall childcare involvement of grandmothers in the sample, including second moms, are striking. The working class children in the London and Stromfels samples were mostly cared for by grandmothers or other relatives after they stopped being in full-time parental care, when parents returned to work or training/education after their leave period was over. Specifically, 62 percent of working class children in the London sample and 31 percent of children in the Stromfels sample were in the primary or secondary care of their grandmothers. For the purposes of this paper, a child's primary care giver is defined as spending more than 42 hours per week caring for a child. No children in the Stockholm sample were in the care of grandmothers at all after their parents ceased being their full time caregivers. Like their middle class counterparts, working class children in Stockholm were typically cared for by teachers in publicly-subsidized daycare centers. Only eight percent of London middle class children and no middle class children in Stromfels were in the care of grandmothers after children's parents ceased being their full time care givers.

In London and Stromfels, grandmothers usually became "second moms" as soon as mothers resumed training or returned to work after their leave was over. On average, grandmothers first turned into second moms when children were five months old in London, and eight months old in Stromfels. As soon as these children entered publicly subsidized daycare, Kindergarten (Germany) or nursery school (Britain) around the age of three years, the hours that grandmothers cared for their grandchildren considerably decreased. In other words, second moms typically cared for children younger than three years old. They provided care for time periods covering from six months of up to 38 months.

Most of the parents who relied on childcare by second moms were dual-earner couples: five out of seven London and three out of four Stromfels households had two earners. With the exception of one middle class family in London, all second mom families were working class families. In London, five second mom families described themselves as "white British" or "white English," one family as "white Irish" and one family as "Afro-Caribbean." Three Stromfels second mom families described themselves as "German" and one family as "Turkish." In second mom families, mothers and grandmothers were children's primary care givers, while fathers and grandfathers were children's secondary caregivers. Most second moms (90 percent) were maternal grandmothers. Most of them were able to take on childcare responsibilities because they were not employed and in good health, and lived within driving distance from the child's home, or shared a home with the child. Only one second mom in the London sample was still employed, and she scheduled her work hours so she could care for her granddaughter while her daughter was at work. Typically, second moms only took care of one grandchild at a time. In most second mom families, grandmothers cared for their grandchildren during the day, and

children spend nights and weekends at their parents. However, in one Stromfels and two London families, children spent weekdays and weeknights at their grandmothers' or grandparents' home, because the distance between parents' and grandmothers' residences was too long for parents to cover on a daily basis. In one working class and one middle class family in London, mothers lived in their parents' homes with their children. One of these mothers had separated from her child's father, and the other child's father was away at university in another part of the country.

In summary, in my sample, the extensive and regular childcare involvement of second moms typically occurred among working class families in Britain and Germany with a child younger than three years, but not in Sweden. In Stockholm, grandparents also cared for children, but not to the same extent as grandmothers in London.

How grandmothers become second moms

Why is it that so many working class parents in London and Stromfels relied on grandmothers for childcare to such a large extent? In the following, I discuss how two families in London chose their childcare to demonstrate that parents in London and Stromfels involved second moms for material and emotional reasons. Parents in Stromfels listed similar reasons as parents in London when asked why they had chosen grandmothers as caregivers. First, many parents reported that they opted for second moms for financial reasons.[7] Other parents said that they did not trust other types of caregivers. Parents also mentioned the non-availability of daycare that covered their work and commuting hours, and the lack of access to affordable quality daycare or a daycare spot of their choice as reasons for deciding to involve second moms. A few parents reported that they chose grandmothers as caregivers because they believed that infants needed "maternal" interactions in a home setting in the absence of their mothers.

The following examples indicate that in second-mom families, grandmothers filled parents' need for affordable, trustworthy and flexible childcare after mothers returned to work. In addition, grandmothers also provided a financial and emotional safety net for their daughters and their children. The first family I will discuss below is Muriel's.[8]

Muriel, an Afro-Caribbean mother of two children, worked full time as a medical assistant at Fairfield Hospital in London. Muriel was married to Daniel, a construction worker. They had an eight year-old daughter called Elizabeth and a two year-old son, James. When I interviewed Muriel, she told me that James spent the entire week at her mother Corinne's house. Corinne lived a thirty minute-drive away from Muriel and Daniel's home. Muriel left James at Corinne's on Sunday evenings and picked him up on Friday afternoons. Muriel described Corinne's care giving role in the following way: "she's like a second mom to James as well as a grandma." When I asked Muriel why she had involved her mother, Muriel responded:

> *[There is a private nursery nearby], and I inquired how much it would be to put my baby there, and I found out that it was very expensive, so that was, would take quite a chunk out of my salary, including my, my other expensive, expenses, and that would have been not worth coming back to work for.*

Muriel also reported that her trust in Corinne had played an important role in her decision. When I inquired with Muriel whether a family childcare provider—called "child minder" in Britain—would have been a care option for her, Muriel said: "No, I didn't want to give my child to a child minder. I think I prefer my child to be with other children- if I was going to put them in a nursery situation- I'd rather them be with other children, but I trust my mom, and I know he's, he's being looked after, you know, very well."

Every other day, Muriel took Elizabeth over to Corinne's to visit James and Corinne. Muriel told me that James would stop staying over at Corinne's as soon as he started nursery school at the age of three and a half years. Since nursery school, which is free, only runs in the mornings, Muriel's plan was to then pay private daycare center staff to pick up James from nursery school and care for him in the afternoons.

Similarly to Muriel, several of my London but not my Stromfels interviewees noted that they trusted grandmothers with the care of infants and toddlers, while they did not trust family childcare providers, the alternative type of caregivers they could have afforded. For instance, Julie, a white mother of a one year-old son called Joey, who worked part time as a receptionist at Stillgrounds Hospital, hinted at why she only trusted her parents to take care of Joey:

> *My mom and dad look after him, which is very handy. Otherwise I wouldn't have gone back to work. If I'd had to leave him with somebody else, I wouldn't have come back to work. Because I, you hear so many horror stories now, and I'm lucky that I've got a choice.*

These findings corroborate research by Jane Wheelock and Katharine Jones (2002) on informal care for working parents in urban Britain. Wheelock and Jones' study found that parents mentioned trust as the most frequently mentioned benefit of childcare by grandparents. In general, the parents in my London sample were much more fearful of child abuse by caregivers outside the family than parents in Stromfels and Stockholm, who placed great trust in family childcare providers[9] and daycare center staff. My study found that the British media and government regulations that highlighted the abusive potential of individual caregivers that were not registered with local government authorities instilled a sense of fear of abusive care providers in parents. In addition, children in London were younger when they ceased being in full time parental care. Since parents considered infants more vulnerable than older children, this may also account for parents' heightened sense of fear of abusive

care providers. The mothers in the London sample returned to work much earlier than mothers in Germany or Sweden.[10] Accordingly, the children in London remained in full time parental care the shortest—six months on average—while children in Stromfels were in parental full time care for 15 months, and children in Stockholm for 16 months. In all research sites, middle class children remained in parents' full time primary care for about two months longer than working-class children.[11]

Caroline and Mike were another London family who relied on childcare by a second mom. Caroline, a white woman in her early thirties, worked as a full-time research associate at Courtview Hospital in London. She was married to Mike, a white Welshman several years her junior who had just graduated from Warwick University. Caroline and Mike had a two year-old daughter called Eve. While Mike was at university, Caroline acted as the family's main breadwinner. After Eve was born, Caroline had just started working at Courtview Hospital and was living with her parents in Kent for half a year before she moved into her own house a five minute-walk away from her parents'. Caroline returned to work three months after Eve's birth and then her mother, Betty, became Eve's main caregiver. When I inquired with Caroline why she had asked Betty to care for Eve, Caroline explained:

> *Well, I mean, if you [exhales], we couldn't have afforded childcare anyway. But added to that, even if I could afford it, I don't think I could have left a baby as young as she was with anybody else than my mother, really, because she was only twelve weeks old. [...] And the other consideration is that because I commute, it's a very long day, and there aren't very many nurseries that will take them so early in the morning, you know, it would be, I leave at, I would need to drop her off somewhere by half past seven at the very latest, and I wouldn't be able to pick her up until six. And there aren't many nurseries that would do a day that long. So that's another problem.*

In Caroline's case, her birth family acted as a financial safety net that caught her and Eve when her and Mike's household income was low. Caroline's parents also acted as an emotional safety net at a time when Mike lived elsewhere most of the year.

These examples illustrated why parents decided to rely on second moms as care providers. They showed that financial and emotional reasons played a large role in parents' decisions. Cultural reasons may also play a role insofar as it may be more culturally acceptable for working class families and Afro-Caribbean or Turkish families to involve grandmothers in childcare to a considerable extent.[12] In the following, I will discuss how British and German family policies may shape these decisions.

How family policies make second mom families

I argue that in Britain grandmothers turn into second moms because of the

short unpaid leave in combination with a lack of childcare services and a culture emphasizing the potentially abusive character of individual care providers outside the family. In Germany, where parental leave is longer than in the other two countries but not as generous as in Sweden, and where affordable publicly-funded daycare for children younger than three years is less easily accessible than in Sweden, employed parents of children younger than three years also rely on grandmothers as their children's care providers. Similarly to London, it was mostly lower-income parents in Stromfels who relied on childcare by grandmothers.

In Sweden, it is mothers and fathers on parental leave, and then mostly publicly subsidized and/or managed daycare that play the care giving role that second moms assume in working class families in Britain and Germany. I propose that Swedish family policies reduce the demand for and supply of childcare by second moms in several ways. First, the comparatively long and generous parental leave, the extensive provision of affordable quality daycare or family childcare that parents trust, and employed parents' entitlement to part-time employment, eliminate parents' need for second moms. Second, Swedish family policies also influence the supply side of second mom-childcare. Since Swedish family policies have encouraged women's labour market participation for over thirty years, grandmothers in Sweden may also be more likely to still participate in the labour market than grandmothers in Britain and Germany. Owing to previous family policies that encouraged women to stay home or work part-time and men to be breadwinners, today's grandmothers in Britain and Germany may have given up employment after their children were born and may therefore be more available to care for grandchildren today. This suggests that effects of family policy, labour market and retirement policy may also be long-term.

Conclusion

This study first highlighted that for employed parents in Sweden, the childcare gap between the end of parental leave and the start of primary school is narrowest, due to the availability of affordable quality childcare services. Employed parents in Britain face the widest family policy gap because the leave period is the shortest, and access to affordable childcare services very limited, especially for children younger than three years. Working class parents chose to involve grandmothers in childcare to a substantial degree for financial reasons and because they feared child abuse by care providers outside the family, especially in London. I suggested that the British family policy gap and a culture of fear of abusive care givers perpetuated by the media and government discourses on childcare were responsible for working class families relying on second moms for childcare to a considerable extent.

To conclude, this article showed that different family policies may produce different kinds of families. Family policies that leave childcare gaps such as British and German family policies may produce "second mom families." In

second mom families, grandmothers are involved in childcare to a large extent, and three generations interact on a regular basis. These findings substantiate and extend sociological studies on families in Europe and the U.S., especially the research on families by Karen V. Hansen (2001, 2002, 2005) and Christian Alt and Walter Bien (1994), which demonstrates that nuclear families are not really as nuclear as they may seem at first glance. The findings of this study also suggest that family policies indirectly function as pension policies in the sense that they influence the everyday lives of older women. Thus, this study also contributes to feminist analyses of welfare regimes, which have typically focused on maternal involvement in care work and employment, by highlighting the work of older women. Lastly, this article also suggests that the supply of many workers with childcare responsibilities is made possible by the care work of older women. Most of these women do not derive financial benefits from their work, even though they may receive emotional benefits or payments in kind.

This latter point reveals an obvious limitation of this study: it obfuscates the voices and experiences of grandmothers themselves, because the main aim of my research project was to explore how different family policies shape parents' experiences with their childcare. While this research suggests that different family policies shape the daily lives of grandmothers in different ways because of the ways in which states fund and organize the childcare of preschoolers, further research will need to show what this means to the lives of grandmothers themselves.

This study was funded by two project grants from the Center for German and European Studies at Brandeis University, the Vibert Douglas International Fellowship of the International Federation of University Women, a research grant of the Swedish Institute, an exchange scholarship by Brandeis University to the University in my German research site, a Brandeis University Dissertation Year Fellowship, and a Mellon Post-doctoral Fellowship at the University of Virginia. I would like to thank Oliver Benoit, Karen V. Hansen, Rafael Hernandez-Arias, Christa Kelleher, Jytte Klausen, Rianne Mahon, George Ross, Elspeth Slayter, Herman Schwartz and Charmaine Yoest for commenting on earlier versions of this paper. Special thanks also go to Marianne Kriz and Narayani Manandhar, my baby daughter's "second moms" when I was writing this article.

[1]By "care work" I understand the physical and emotional work involved in raising children.

[2]Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) defined welfare regimes as the distribution of the production of welfare among the state, the family, and the market.

[3]Anne Gauthier (2000) has argued that the literature on family policies is limited in so far as it does not consider the "outcomes" of family policies.

[4]To date, there is only one cross-country study (Windebank, 1999, 2001) that explores the effects of social policies on employed parents from an in-depth

perspective. However, this research focuses on the consequences of family policies on the gendered division of household work and childrearing, not on how family policies affect parents' childcare choices and experiences with their childcare.

[5]In Stromfels, I interviewed 41 parents from 22 two-parent households and five single-mother households. In London, I carried out interviews with 31 parents from 24 couple households and three single-mother households. In Stockholm, I interviewed parents from 19 couple households and six single-mother households.

[6]These types of patchwork situations existed in five out of the 27 German and two out of the 27 British households in my sample.

[7]Ninety percent of these parents did not pay "second moms" in cash but in kind, for instance by giving them gifts, or by driving them to "the shops."

[8]The names of people and their workplaces have been changed to ensure respondents' confidentiality.

[9]Family childcare providers are defined as paid caregivers who take care of children in their own home.

[10]The figures look similar at the aggregate level. In 1996, 67 percent of British mothers who were employed during pregnancy returned to work within nine to eleven months after giving birth (Office of National Statistics, 1998).

[11]For Britain, this finding also holds true at the aggregate level. In 1996, 67 percent of British mothers who were employed during pregnancy returned to work within nine to eleven months after giving birth (Office of National Statistics, 1998).

[12]For the U.S. context, Lynet Uttal (1999) has shown that African American and Mexican American families find it more acceptable than Anglo American families to rely on childcare by relatives.

References

Alt, Christian and Walter Bien. 1994. "Eigeninteresse oder Solidarität? Die moderne Mehrgenerationenfamilie." *Diskurs* 1.

Brannen, Julia and Peter Moss. 1991. *Managing Mothers. Dual Earner Households After Maternity Leave.* London: Unwin Hyman.

Department for Employment and Education. 2000. "Provision for Children under Five Years of Age in Private, Voluntary, Independent and Maintained Sectors in England." Online: www.dfee.gov.uk.

Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1999. *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

European Commission Network on Childcare. 1995. *A Review of Services for Young Children in the European Union.* Brussels: European Commission.

Försäkringskassan. 2000. "Föräldraförsäkring." Online: www.fk.se.

Gauthier, Anne. 2000. "Public Policies Affecting Fertility and Families in Europe: a Survey of the 15 Member States." Paper prepared for the European Observatory on Family Matters, Sevilla Spain, September 15-16, 2000.

Hansen, Karen. 2005. *Not-So-Nuclear Families: Class, Gender, and Networks of Care.* Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hansen, Karen. 2002. "Staging Reciprocity and Mobilizing Networks in Working Families." Working Paper 33. Center for Working Families, the University of California at Berkeley.

Hansen, Karen. 2001. "Class Contingencies in Networks of Care for School-Aged Children." Working Paper 27. Center for Working Families, the University of California at Berkeley.

Jenson, Jane. 1997. "Who Cares? Gender and Welfare Regimes." *Social Politics* 4:182-187.

Lewis, Jane. 1993. "Introduction: Women, Work, Family and Social Policies in Europe." *Women and Social Policies in Europe. Work, Family and the State.* Jane Lewis, ed. Aldershot, UK: Edward, Elgar. 1-24.

Lewis, Jane. 1992. "Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes." *Journal of European Social Policy* 2: 159-173.

Office of National Statistics. 1998. "Social Focus on Women and Men: Work and Family." Online: www.ons.gov.uk/

Orloff, Ann Shola. 1993. "Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship: the Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations and Welfare States." *American Sociological Review* 58: 303-328.

Ostner, Ilona. 2003. "Costly Families: Balancing Work and Family Life in 'Conservative' Welfare States." Paper given at the Mellon Sawyer Seminar on the Welfare State and Gender, Charlottesville, Virginia, April 4, 2003.

Ostner, Ilona. 1994. "Back to the Fifties: Gender and Welfare in Unified Germany." *Social Politics* 1: 32-60.

Ostner, Ilona. 1993. "Slow Motion: Women, Work and the Family in Germany." *Women and Social Policies in Europe. Work, Family and the State.* Jane Lewis, ed. Aldershot, UK: Edward Elgar. 92-115.

Rerrich, Maria S. 1996. "Modernizing the Patriarchal Family in West Germany: Some Findings on the Redistribution of Family Work between Women." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 3:27-37.

Sainsbury, Diane. 1999. "Gender, Policy Regimes, and Politics." Pp. in *Gender and Welfare State Regimes.* Diane Sainsbury, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 245-275.

Sainsbury, Diane. 1994. "Women's and Men's Social Rights: Gendering Dimensions of Welfare States." *Gendering Welfare States.* Diane Sainsbury, ed. London: Sage. 150-169.

Skolverket. 1998. *Barnomsorgen i Siffror.* Stockholm: Skolverket.

Spiess, C. Katharina, Felix Büchel and Joachim R. Frick. 2002. "Kinderbetreuung

in West-und Ostdeutschland: Sozioökonomischer Hintergrund entscheidend." *DIW-Wochenbericht* 31.

Thorne, Barrie. 1999. "Pick-up Time at Oakdale Elementary School: Work and Family from the Vantage Point of Children. Working Paper 2. Center for Working Families, the University of California at Berkeley.

Uttal, Lynet. 1999. "Using Kin for Child Care: Embedment in the Socioeconomic Networks of Extended Families." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61: 845-857.

Ward, Clare, Angela Dale and Heather Joshi. 1996. "Combining Employment with Childcare: An Escape from Dependence?" *Journal of Social Policy* 25: 223-247.

Wheelock, Jane and Katharine Jones. 2002. "'Grandparents are the Next Best Thing': Informal Childcare for Working Parents in Urban Britain." *Journal of Social Policy* 31: 441-463.

Windebank, Jan. 2001. "Dual-Earner Couples in Britain and France: Gender Divisions of Domestic Labour and Parenting Work in Different Welfare States." *Work, Employment and Society* 15: 269-290.

Windebank, Jan. 1999. "Political Motherhood and the Everyday Experience of Mothering: a Comparison of the Childcare Strategies of French and British Working Mothers." *Journal of Social Policy* 28: 1-25.

Priscilla A. Gibson
and Carolyn Cornils Scherer

The Social Construction of Success for Grandchildren by African American Grandmothers

This article describes results from a qualitative study on African American grandmothers' experience of raising their grandchildren. One of the major findings is how these grandmothers socially construct their ideas of success for their grandchildren, which emerged into four themes: (a) acquiring knowledge, (b) developing self-esteem, (c) preparation for the future, and (d) disconnecting money from success.

> *I am praying to God to forgive me if I have made mistakes and given them (grandsons) something that they ought not to have or leading them in a direction that they should not have been in. Hopefully, God will have mercy on them and give them a chance to be successful.* (Grandmother Steel)

African American grandmothers who accept the role of primary caregiver to their grandchildren encounter the difficult task of raising these children to not only avoid the social problems that plagued their biological parents, but also to raise their grandchildren to achieve successful, productive adulthood. How these grandmothers think about successful outcomes for their grandchildren is lacking in the literature yet is significant for many reasons. Nationally, 2.1 million grandchildren are being cared for by their grandmothers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Disproportionately, African American grandmothers accept this role (Mason & Link, 2002). Despite the numbers, the contexts of grandmother caregiving and African American culture have been translated into negative stigmatization that precludes successful outcomes. One reason for this may be the lack of understanding about African American families in kinship care (Harris, 2004). The purpose of this article is to report how African American grandmother caregivers construct their ideas of successful outcomes for their grandchildren.

Grandmothers' role as caregivers can be described as a socio-political act. The phrase socio-political describes the factors in one's environment that have an impact on a person's life. Harriet McAdoo (2001) suggests racism as one such factor. From this perspective, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1994) notes that Black children who are being raised in adverse conditions require parenting that must comprise survival skills and values that move them beyond their proscribed place. As caregivers, these grandmothers act to preserve their grandchildren's family and cultural connections. Therefore the context of grandmother caregiving is viewed as a protective factor (Scannapieco & Jackson, 1996) and strength of African American families (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993).

Parenting African American children in kinship care

Kinship care is described as the caregiving of a young relative when the biological parents are unwilling or unable to provide care or are absent. African American grandmothers raising grandchildren is a complex phenomenon, which differs drastically from the traditional role of grandmother. Traditional grandmothering is a role contingent on directions from the biological parents who decide the level and intensity of interactions between the grandmother and the grandchild. Grandmother caregiving, however, is an intergenerational parenting role with two social functions, that of primary caregiver and grandmother. This places the decision-making responsibilities for interaction between the grandchildren and their biological parents within the domain of the grandmother. Although the child is a blood relative whom the grandmother has likely known since birth, it is not a mother/child relationship.

Grandmother caregivers face obstacles not encountered by biological parents (Generations United, 2005). Some of these obstacles are associated with basic necessities such as the lack of access to health care because of grandmothers' inability to place children on their health insurance policies and school attendance due to the problems of enrolling children in school. Others are related to emotions, for example, dealing with feelings of loss experienced by both grandmother and grandchildren due to the absence of the middle generation. The grandmother has lost the dream of a productive adult child; the child has lost a parent.

Irving Leon (2002) notes that the self-selected parenting role is highly motivating, despite the obstacles encountered. It has been well documented that caregiving of grandchildren in this context is rewarding (Gibson, 1996; Smith, 2000) as well as stressful (Dowdell, 1995). Unlike some legal adoptive parents who experience a challenge to their sense of parental entitlement (Leon, 2002), African American grandmother caregivers, because of their relational connection to their grandchildren, feel a sense of obligation, which may be intensified because of the social problems of the biological parents. Becoming the primary caregivers generally occurs because the grandmothers' adult children, the biological parents of their grandchildren, have succumbed to

social problems such as AIDS, domestic violence, drug abuse, and incarceration (Minkler & Roe, 1993).

Grandmothers are not always aware of how demanding their role will become when parenting their grandchildren. African American children are overwhelmingly represented in areas that traditionally are viewed as indicators of problems and barriers to success, compounded by being African American in an urban environment. African American youths are more likely to be suspended from school, interact with the juvenile justice system, and have a negative encounter with law enforcement than are their peers from other racial/ethnic groups. These negative social interactions in society have resulted in labels that are pathological (Wright & Anderson, 1998).

Caregiving in the context of kinship care is viewed as an act of resistance toward the child welfare system. When assuming the role of primary caregivers, grandmothers remove their grandchildren from the possibility of going into the foster care system where strangers would care for them. This is a significant act because nationwide, African American children are disproportionately represented in out-of-home placement in the foster care system. Urban areas are experiencing the colorization of the child welfare (Berrick, Barth & Needell, 1994) and juvenile justice systems (Butterfield, 1995), as well as an increase in the numbers of grandmothers caring for grandchildren (American Association of Retired Persons, 1999).

Research on successful parenting of African American children

Research on parenting successful African American children has generally ignored parenting in alternative family forms such as grandmother caregiving and has focused on parenting by biological parents. There is research on parenting abilities of biological mothers (Strom *et al.*, 2002; Woody & Woody, 2003), factors influencing successful foster parenting (Buehler, Cox, & Cuddeback, 2003), and aspects that contribute to resilience in African American children in kinship care (Johnson-Garner & Meyers, 2003; Gibson, 2005).

There is limited research on the parenting experience of alternative caregivers; three exceptions will be discussed here. Cheryl Buehler, Mary Cox and Gary Cuddeback (2003) examined foster parents' perceptions of familial and parental factors that promote or inhibit successful parenting. Findings indicated that the main family factors conducive to successful child outcomes in the context of foster care were a deep, heartfelt concern for children's welfare, faith/church support, an open-mind, and tolerance and acceptance of the child's differences. Monique Johnson-Garner and Steve Meyers (2003) found that positive results occurred when kinship caregivers accepted their new roles, were seen by the children as their parents, and were supported by extended family. Priscilla Gibson (2005) found that grandmother caregivers incorporated seven parenting strengths: (a) maintaining effective communication, (b) taking a strong role in the education of their grandchildren, (c) providing socio-

emotional support, (d) involving extended family, (e) involving grandchildren in selective community activities, (f) acknowledging and working with the vulnerabilities of grandchildren, and (g) working with the absence of the biological parent(s).

In summary, parenting African American grandchildren by grandmothers is a difficult task due to the socio-political factors in their lives resulting from racism and discrimination. Being cared for by a grandmother also carries negative stigma due to the social problems of the biological parents, prior maltreatment, and being parented by someone who is not the child's biological parent. Grandmothers' parenting is viewed as strength, but it is also inherently stressful for the caregiver. What remains unexplored is grandmothers' conceptualization of success for their grandchildren. How does the unique context of African American grandmothers as caregivers with its inherent influences guide older, intergenerational caregivers' social construction of success for their grandchildren? It would be beneficial to social scientists to know how grandmothers define success for their grandchildren.

Critical theory framework

Critical theory was used to frame this study and can inform the socio-political context of grandmother caregiving in African American culture. Research conducted in this context seeks to provide an understanding of the experiences of oppressed groups, educate them about the social conditions under which they live, and encourage them to reflect on actions necessary for social change. The process of interviewing grandmothers allowed the participants to create their own conceptualization of successful parenting, which is congruent with Sadye Logan (1990) who stressed the importance of Black women's self-definition. The interviews allowed the grandmothers to share their ideas about the context of intergenerational parenting of grandchildren whose biological parents are absent. The result is knowledge similar to Logan's description of African American women's role as the "healing force within Black families and communities" (1990: 194).

Methods

Capturing the parenting experience of grandmothers is an emerging area of research on relative caring or kinship care. This article reports findings from a larger research project entitled, "Raising a Vulnerable Generation: African American Grandmother Caregivers Preparing their Grandchildren to Succeed in the Twenty-First Century," which was conducted by the first author from March 31, 2001, to January 7, 2003 in the Midwest.

This qualitative study was used to capture the uniqueness, diversity, and complexity of issues with populations contextually and from their own perspectives. It was also used to develop a social construction of intergenerational parenting by African American grandmothers guided by their voices. The lack of information in this area makes it a natural fit for qualitative methods.

Informants

Eligibility criteria included being (a) African American (b) grandmother, great-grandmother, or great-aunt, and (c) primary caregiver for children (ages 5-18) with non-residential parents. Each participant was given a $25.00 gift certificate as compensation. Participants consisted of 17 African American grandmothers, who ranged in age from 49 to 73, with an average age of 59.8. The majority of grandmothers (14) were without spouses. They were highly educated with ten participants having some college education and one with a college degree. Most (10) were employed; four had disabilities and three were retired. Their time as caregivers ranged from 16 months to 16 years. There were a total of 41 grandchildren in their care. The children ranged in age from five months to 18 years.

Procedures

Participants were recruited from two social service agencies that provided services to grandparents as caregivers. Informants were instructed to call the first author and were screened for eligibility to participate in the study. After each interview, grandmothers were asked to refer other grandmothers in similar situations interested in participating in the study to the researcher.

Interview guide

The semi-structured interview guide consisted of a grand tour research question (Crewell, 1994), "What are your experiences preparing your grandchild to reach successful and productive adulthood" and 20 sub-questions. The sub-questions inquired into areas such as (a) defining success for grandchildren; (b) barriers to parenting; (c) factors to enhance parenting; and (d) interactions with absent biological parent(s). An information sheet obtained demographic data on grandmothers and the grandchildren in their care. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the homes of informants and generally lasted less than two hours. Interviews were audiotape recorded and resulting transcripts formed the basis for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The comparative method approach of data analysis was used in which data were analyzed for themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first author read each transcription while listening to the respective audiotape to become familiar with the data. Secondly, individual transcripts were read a second time and coded for theme, a process called open coding. Third, themes were reduced across transcripts and merged into categories. To add rigor to the study, findings were presented to two groups of grandmother caregivers as a form of member checking. No new themes were added by these groups.

Findings

Grandmothers' social construction of success consisted of four themes,

which described actions and behaviors their grandchildren need to either engage in or perform. Themes are discussed below along with quotes from the grandmothers.

Acquiring knowledge

Grandmothers wanted their grandchildren to learn not only by making their school work a priority but also by acquiring knowledge in many other areas. Grandmother Copper shared that she has discussions with her grandson regarding success. She stated, "I just try the best I can to make sure that he is successful." She is convinced that he will achieve success:

> *He is going to be successful. See, sometimes some people can see what you can't see. He loves soccer; he loves any kind of sport, I'd take him to the park, I am the one who taught him the bat and the ball. I can't run like him but I try to play soccer with him. D. (grandson) and I had a conversation and he knows we have to buckle down on his reading.*

She cautioned him about barriers that would hinder his success:

> *I just tell him don't mess up with that stuff [drugs], it will make you do things and say things that you really don't mean. I want to live and see you successful and maybe one day you will marry a nice lady and you might have a little great grandchild one day.*

Grandmother Bronze was concerned that her granddaughter would allow an interest in boys and her dislike of school to defer her learning:

> *What I think of is her graduating from high school. G. [granddaughter] does not like high school. It is hard for me to keep her head in books and mind on school. She is typically a teenage girl, who talks about boys. I understand that, it is part of life and growing up. And she is of that age. But she can put education in there too. It is very important to graduate with a diploma in order to go on with life and take care of yourself. Success to me will mean to get her an education and her diploma. I will push her to go to college and get her diploma that is one step. If I get to do that I will feel awfully good.*

Learning and obtaining an education was also emphasized by Grandmother Cobalt who talked to her grandson about acquiring skills in all areas of his life:

> *He is young, I explain to him about education, 'I want you to learn, and I want you to be able to take care of yourself.' I try to teach him to clean up and wash dishes. I teach him how to iron his clothes, I am teaching him cooking*

> *and I am watching him. I know he is only 8 years old but I'm just taking my time and going slow with him so that he can understand. But I also tell him about the important things in life, I ask him 'what you want to be?' He tells me he wants to be a football player and whatever. We talk one-on-one and he wants to be successful.*

Grandmothers wanted their grandchildren to learn from the mistakes of their biological parents. Grandmother Iron reflected on wanting her grandsons to have a different outcome than that of her son, their father:

> *I think about my son and compare them [grandsons and their father]. I want them [grandsons] to succeed better than what he did. I want them to be—like when they are between 20 and 23—that they can stand on their own feet without depending on me or on my husband. That would be success to me. To be independent and to take care of themselves.*

Developing self-esteem

Several grandmothers stressed the value of grandchildren loving themselves as an important factor in success. Grandmother Silver combined self-esteem with social support:

> *One thing about it [success] the way I feel, they [grandchildren] have to feel good about themselves. They have to like themselves, if a person or child don't like themselves or have a low self-esteem, they are not going to make it in this world. And you got to like yourself to make it in this world. If you make up your mind what you want to do, you can do it. With the support of the family they can make it, they can be a success. But they got to go to school. And nowadays kids can take the babies to school with them, so they got all the opportunity in the world to go to school and be a success.*

Whereas Grandmother Gold coupled self-esteem with respect. She noted:

> *Success in the future is gaining respect from others and loving you enough. So when you love yourself, you should respect yourself; other people will see that and will give you back respect. Success as far as your job, that's a whole lot of success. Success is the way you conduct yourself, that's my way of thinking.*

Grandmother Zinc explained the difference between success and respect: "My daughter owns a shop and they [grandchildren] see her as a success. They know doctors and lawyers in the church but they don't look up to them as successful role models. They look at them as a respectable person." Grandmother Zinc continued by saying that years ago, highly educated people were sometimes referred to as "college educated fools."

Preparation for the future

Preparing for the future seemed like an essential component of success. This preparation required action on the part of the grandchildren. Two of the grandmothers were very succinct in their descriptions. Grandmother Aluminum said, "He got the strength. I know he can do it, but success will be doing it." Grandmother Platinum added the importance of focus: "If he keeps his mind on what he is suppose to do and not what everybody is saying about him, and does his work, that would be success to me."

Grandmother Nickel included the importance of responsibility. She listed six "musts" for her grandson to be a productive adult: "learning responsibility, choosing the right associates, completing his education, not being a follower but a leader, planning at a young age, and setting goals at a young age." She concluded by acknowledging her expectations for his future, "That's what I see for him."

Grandmother Magnesium also stressed responsibility: "Being responsible. Like if you have a job that you are supposed to do, somebody shouldn't have to remind you that, that is your job that you are supposed to do it."

Grandmother Steel advised her grandsons to make attaining success a priority:

> *You don't have to get married or have girlfriends and have children. Become successful first become responsible and recognize your faults and make the best of them. Make decisions and discern which are the rights and wrongs and pick up the rights. There is always school and when you have the opportunity you should take advantage of it. I just try to encourage them to be successful and respectful and always respect women. Give them their space and if you don't like the way they do or act you get away from them and never put your hands on them.*

Disconnecting money from success

Many grandmothers seemed to be concerned that their grandchildren would focus on money as the only measure of success. They overwhelmingly wanted to discourage this idea. While no questions were asked about income or money in relation to their definition of success, the following quotes support the importance of it in the parenting of their grandchildren. Grandmother Nickel stated: "I lay down the rules that let him know that money's not everything. Success is not based on how much money you have. Success is based on what you think is success."

Grandmother Titanium wanted her grandchildren to combine material goods with positive personal qualities:

> *It is hard to put a success rate on jobs and material things because it is just that. We have a society, which looks at having a home, buying a home, or having a nice vehicle as success. That is right and good to have. But also*

> *being a decent human being, honest, and truthful. You can repeat what you have said and not be ashamed of who you are, where you are from and what you are doing.*

Other grandmothers also emphasized positive personal qualities. Grandmother Tungsten talked to her grandchildren about being a good human being and the choices they make:

> *I think success is not in materialistic things, but in your success as a human being, in education, and being the best person you can possibly be. Choosing the best choices to make so that you can be successful in this world today and meeting different people.*

She went on to explain that her view of success is complex:

> *Succeeding is a lot of things to me and it's not just about materialistic things. So I want them (grandchildren) to succeed as human beings to be able to make the right choices.*

Grandmother Tantalum said:

> *I do not preach to them [grandchildren] that money is the way to success. But there are people who have a lot of money who are not successful. So to me to be successful is to be independent. And if there is a positive direction they want to go, we would support them in that.*

Grandmother Zinc distinguished success from money:

> *I think a lot of time people have a lot of money but they are poor in friendship. You can still have money but you have nothing else. Success as Oprah [entertainer], she has money but something about her I don't feel good about it. I want people to feel good about my kids.*

Discussion and implications

The purpose of this study was to learn how African American grandmothers raise their grandchildren to be successful. Findings were merged into four interrelated themes: (a) acquiring knowledge, (b) developing self-esteem, (c) preparation for the future, and (d) disconnecting money from success. These findings provide steps toward building knowledge about intergenerational parenting of grandchildren by African American grandmothers. Grandmothers wanting their grandchildren to succeed is not new, what is enlightening is the identification of the four themes, which provide insight into grandmothers' conceptualization of success, identifies the influential factors in success, and depicts the level of awareness that grandmothers possess regarding success.

Each theme contributed a unique quality to the grandmothers' conceptualization of success. Under the acquiring knowledge theme, grandmothers disclosed that attaining success required liking school, being focused, and achieving beyond that of their biological parents. One grandmother introduced the importance of independence. In the developing self-esteem theme, grandmothers noted that grandchildren had to see themselves in a positive light. This theme is congruent with Carmen Moten (2004) who noted that children's opinions of their abilities directly influence their success. An accompanying quality was respect for self and others. Under the preparation for the future theme, grandmothers expressed a view that their grandchildren possess the necessary capacity to achieve a successful outcome. The final theme, disconnecting money from successful outcomes, was surprising. Under this theme, grandmothers seemed to place a higher priority on attaining humanitarian qualities. They wanted their grandchildren to have integrity and be a good human being.

In analyzing the data, it became apparent that grandmothers had reflected on how to help their grandchildren achieve success. They used phrases such as "I want," "very important," and "make sure." Some stressed the importance of preparing the grandchildren early for success. Other factors mentioned were independence and effective decision-making. These findings show grandmothers have high expectations of their grandchildren. Moten listed parental expectations of African American parents as "commitment to education, self-help, service to others, and a strong religious and spiritual orientation" (2004: 145). Expectations of children were found to be higher with kinship caregivers than in other out-of-home living arrangements (Berrick, Barth & Needell, 1994).

Viewed within a socio-political framework, grandmothers seem to be very aware of the many influences in the lives of their grandchildren that would act as barriers to their achieving success. They identified factors such as dropping out of school, consuming drugs, making undesirable choices, and engaging in premature sexual activities. They talked to their grandchildren about working to achieve success and were supporting their efforts if they were positive. They also cautioned their grandchildren about placing money and income above personal qualities.

Concomitantly, grandmothers were knowledgeable about the thoughts and actions their grandchildren needed that could translate into achieving success, such as valuing education, acquiring life skills, and acting in a humanitarian manner. The absence of the grandchildren's biological parents did not seem to lessen the grandmothers' expectations of their grandchildren. Further, none of the 17 grandmothers stated that their grandchildren were unable to be successful in life, thus promoting a view of them as capable.

These findings are from 17 African American grandmother caregivers and are not generalizable, but may be used for application with this group. Social scientists should consider two implications from this study. First, grandmother

caregiving is very different from grandmothering. The contemporary experience of this caregiving situation adds a layer of complexity. When assuming the role of caregivers, grandmothers are indeed taking on a different kind of parenting. Regardless of the problems of their grandchildren's parents, grandmothers continue to persevere in their attempts to help another generation achieve successful outcomes. Supporting their endeavours to achieve success will result in increasing their grandchildren's possibilities of attaining positive and successful outcomes.

Second, while African American grandmother caregivers are raising a generation that is viewed by society as vulnerable, these grandchildren are seen and treated by grandmothers as possessing the strengths and skills required to attain successful, productive outcomes. The grandmothers are very knowledgeable about the plights of their grandchildren and their accompanying needs. They are indeed the experts of their grandchildren's situations. Social service workers, researchers, and policy-makers need to acknowledge that grandmothers are not only very knowledgeable about their grandchildren but can also be important resources. Approaching grandmothers with that attitude in mind may facilitate a collaborative working relationship, thus increasing access to these caregivers and the children in their care. The African American grandmothers in this study revealed that they want their grandchildren to achieve success, they talk to them about it, and think that their grandchildren have the capacity to earn it.

References

American Association of Retired Persons. 1999. *Grandparents Information Center*. Washington, DC: American Association for Retired Persons.

Berrick, Jill D., Barth, Richard P., and Needell, Barbara. 1994. "A Comparison of Kinship Foster Home and Foster Family Homes: Implications for Kinship Foster Care as Family Preservation." *Children and Youth Services Review* 16 (2): 33-64.

Buehler, Cheryl, Cox, Mary E., and Cuddeback, Gary. 2003. "Foster Parents' Perceptions of Factors that Promote or Inhibit Successful Fostering." *Qualitative Social Work* 2 (1): 61-83.

Butterfield, Fox. 1995. "More blacks in their 20's have trouble with the law." *New York Times* October 5: A18.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1994. "Shifting the Centre: Race, Class and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood." *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*. E. N. Glenn, G. Chang & L. R. Forcey, eds. New York: Routledge. 45-65.

Corbin, Juliet & Strauss, Anselm. 1990. "Grounded Theory of Research: Procedures, Cannons and Evaluation Criteria." *Qualitative Sociology* 13: 3-21.

Courtney, Mark E., and Barth, Richard P. 1996. "Race and Child Welfare Services: Past Research and Future Directions." *Child Welfare* 75 (2): 99-137.

Crewell, John W. 1994. *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dowdell, Elizabeth B. 1995. "Caregivers Burden: Grandmothers Raising their High-Risk Grandchildren." *Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* 33 (3): 27-30.

Generations United. 2005. Online: http://www.gu.org/projg&ointro.asp

Gibson, Priscilla A. 2005. "Intergenerational Parenting from the Perspective of African American Grandmothers." *Family Relations* 54 (2): 280-297.

Gibson, Priscilla A. 1996. *The Lived Experience of Kinship Care.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Denver.

Harris, Marian S. 2004. "Best Practices in Kinship Care for African American Mothers and Their Children." *Child Welfare Revisited: An Africentric Perspective.* J. E. Everett, S. P. Chipungu, and B. R. Leashore, Eds. New Brunswick, N J: Rutgers University Press. 169-191.

Johnson-Garner, Monique Y. & Meyers, Steve A. 2003. "What Factors Contribute to the Resilience of African American Children Within Kinship Care?" *Child and Youth Care Forum* 32 (2): 255-269.

Leon, Irving G. 2003. "Adoption Losses: Naturally Occurring or Socially Constructed?" *Child Development* 73 (2): 652-663.

Littlejohn-Blake, Sheila M. and Darling, Carol A. 1993. "Understanding the Strengths of African American Families." *Journal of Black Studies* 23 (4): 460-471.

Logan, Sadye M. L. 1990. "Black Families: Race, Ethnicity, Culture, Social Class, and Gender Issues." *Social Work Practice with Black Families: A Culturally Specific Perspective.* S. Logan, E. Freeman, & R. G. McRoy, eds. White Plains, NY: Longman. 18-37.

Marshall, S. 1995. "Ethnic Socialization of African American Children: Implications for Parenting, Identity Development and Academic Achievement." *Journal of Youth and Adolescents* 24 (4): 377-396.

Mason, Sally, & Link, N. 2002. "Relative Foster Parents of HIV-Affected Children." *Child Welfare* 81 (4): 541-569.

McAdoo, Harriet P. 2001. *Black Children: Social, Educational, and Parental Environments.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Minkler, Meredith, & Roe, Kathleen M. 1993. *Grandmothers as Caregivers: Raising Children of the Crack Cocaine Epidemic.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Moten, Carmen P. 2004. "Child-Rearing Practices in African American Families." *Child Welfare Revisited: An Africentric Perspective.* J. E. Everett, S. P. Chipungu, and B. R. Leashore, eds. New Brunswick, N J: Rutgers University Press. 147-155.

Scannapieco, Marie & Jackson, Sondra. 1996. "Kinship Care: The African American Resilient Response to Family Preservation." *Social Work* 41:

190-196.

Smith, Jacqueline M. 2000. "Race, Kinship Care and African American Children." *African American Research Perspectives* 6 (3): 54-64.

Strauss, A., and Corbin, J. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strom, R., Dohrmann, J., Strom, P., Griswold, D., Beckert, T., Strom, S., Moore, E., and Nakagawa, K. 2002. "African American Mothers of Early Adolescents: Perceptions of Two Generations." *Youth & Society* 33 (3): 394-417.

U. S. Bureau of the Census. 2000. Online: http://www.census.gov/c2ss/www/ Date accessed: July 6.

Woody, D., and Woody, D. 2003. "Parent Effectiveness Among Single, Low-Income African American Mothers." *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 12 (4): 91-106.

Wright, Otha L. & Anderson, Joseph P. 1998. "Clinical Social Work Practices with Urban African American Families." *Families in Society* 79 (2): 197-205.

Dolana Mogadime

South African Canadian Women Reclaiming Revolutionary Storytelling Through Grandmother's Warrior Eyes

The present research on South African matrilineal storytelling in the homeplace and the revolutionary knowledge produced through a Grandmother's warrior eyes addresses both the transnational struggles of Black women against racism and sexism, and the use of storytelling as a survival tactic to resist societal systems of oppression. Since my grandmother, Dudu Esther Tshabalala, died in 1958, before I was born (in 1963), I rely on my mother, Goodie Tshabalala's, stories of my grandmother's community contributions and community activist life in South Africa. This research on the knowledge generated through my mother's and grandmother's revolutionary storytelling eyes is a response to bell hooks' (1992) challenge to Black women to do research and record the stories of revolutionary women in our own communities. bell hooks' challenge comes out the fact that storytelling has played a significant role as a form of oral communication through which women from Africa and the African Diaspora create the space to articulate their personal experiences and struggles. Gay Wilentz (1992) and bell hooks (1990), identify the woman-centred genre of storytelling as a site within the "homeplace" for the politization of "a community of resistance." Wilentz informs us that it is the Black mother and daughter dyad relationship, and Black women to women community supportive relations, which have provided the social context for both telling and hearing these stories. The diagram "Storytelling as a Praxis for the Development of Black Women's Community Leadership" details how the storytelling genre in woman to woman supportive relations assisted in the development of Goodie's activist position in life.

The present research on South African matrilineal storytelling in the homeplace and the revolutionary knowledge produced through a Grandmother's warrior eyes, addresses both the transnational struggles of Black women against racism and sexism, and the use of storytelling as a survival tactic to resist societal

systems of oppression. Since my grandmother, Dudu Esther Tshabalala, died in 1958, before I was born (in 1963), I am relying on my mother, Goodie Tshabalala's stories of my grandmother's community contributions and community activist life in South Africa. This matrilineal intergenerational knowledge was an important aspect of my master of education research and the publications that resulted and which focused on Black feminist epistemology (Mogadime, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000).

Our (both Goodie and my own) mutual matrilineal praise poems of our mothers' community upliftment work and communal roles identities, reflect our valuing and understanding of the female self in process. By this I mean as listeners of our mothers' stories, we have both come to value the very self-assertions and empowered self-definition of central importance for our mothers during the process of resisting racial and sexual oppression. Knowledge of this counter consciousness holds transformative possibility for the listener/daughter for the reason that these stories are "vital to the daughter who would know and speak herself as subject" (Burstein, 1996: 13). These are the stories that contribute toward building an empowered self-definition which is rooted in a community ethic of social responsibility which, Black feminists argue, are vital for Black women to develop. Sheila Radford-Hill (1986) refers to the contemporary loss among Black women of the concept of thought and action (praxis) as it has been defined by Black feminists. Radford-Hill argues that the crisis of Black womanhood has resulted from "the deep seated rupture in the structure of self-identity" (1986: 167). She points to various sites which rupture Black women and render us "unable to resist the cultural imperialism of the dominant culture" (1986: 168-169). Patricia Hill Collins (1991) also points to institutions which represent the mainstream such as schools, the media, literature and popular culture as sources of externally defined images, where Black women are objectified. Collins suggests that there are alternative safe spaces, such as Black families where Black women's empowered self-definition and culture of resistance is given the space to develop.

I situate this research (about matrilineal revolutionary storytelling) within the literature produced by researchers in the African Diaspora (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1992; Wilentz, 1992), and also make transnational connections by examining the way in which praise poetry and storytelling provide a praxis (both theory and action) for the development of South African women's community leadership in South Africa and Canada. Tracing the matrilineal line across three generations, I argue that South African women's stories need to be actively told in order to contribute to this transnational dialogue about Black women's culture of resistance (through praxis) and our dynamic leadership and contribution to racial uplift and community building. These are the stories which generate an empowered self-definition in the listening daughter and further inspire the next generation to rise up and go and do great things for oneself and also for one's community.

This research on the knowledge generated through my mother's and

grandmother's revolutionary storytelling eyes is a response to bell hooks' (1992) challenge to Black women to do research and record the stories of revolutionary women in our own communities. bell hooks' challenge comes out of the fact that storytelling has played a significant role as a form of oral communication through which women from Africa and the African Diaspora create the space to articulate their personal experiences and struggles. Gay Wilentz (1992: xxxiii) and hooks identify the woman-centred genre of storytelling as a site within the "homeplace" for the politicization of "a community of resistance" (hooks, 1990: 42). Wilentz (as does Collins) informs us that it is the Black mother and daughter dyad relationship, and Black women to women community supportive relations, which have provided the social context for both telling and hearing these stories.

"Izibongo": a Zulu oral tradition

"Izibongo" (praise poems), is a Zulu oral tradition that is a social communicative site for the cultivation of an ethic of community responsibility and communal role identities in contemporary society. Through my research and analysis of Goodie and Dudu's life and work, I provide examples of how the fluidity of this traditional oral form of communication and dialogue, which names the individual through praise names and praises, becomes reshaped into contemporary storytelling. These stories are the means by which the daughter/listener learns about the female self as a proactive agent of change. My grandmother's stories (as told to me, by her daughter [my mother] as forms of praises), emphasize the role Dudu played in moving the community forward. These stories were central for the development of my mother's own consciousness raising female socialization for agency, community activism and leadership. I have described in detail the extent of this intergenerational contribution elsewhere (Mogadime, 1998a) from Dudu's participation as a Manyano (a women's prayer group leader), to her role as the first lay president of the church, to her feeding schemes and home shelter projects sustaining the livelihood of the young (Mogadime, 1998b)—these all contributed toward Goodie's own commitment to take on a community leadership role in initiating South Africa's first community college in 1991 (Mogadime, 1998a). In this paper I want to specifically explore the cultural, social and material dimensions sustaining a Black feminist epistemology and communal role identities (of community othermother, cultural work through community uplift and leadership) as they are nurtured through storytelling.

Liz Gunner and Mafika Gwala (1991) in "Musho! Zulu Popular Praises," describe Izibongo as praises, praise names or praise poetry. In their collection of praise poetry, Gunner and Gwala characterize the Izibongo as being "primarily concerned with naming, identifying and therefore giving significance and substance to the named person or object" (1991: 2). In my first life history interview with Goodie (Mogadime, 1997), she expanded on what this act of naming, identifying and giving significance did for herself. Her meaning

making is relevant to her own conceptualization of the implications of praise poetry from both a personal and social standpoint. Goodie:

> Praise poetry gives that sense of connection with the community, it inspires you to the work that you do that is revered by other people, so that younger people can emulate you and they can aspire to be like you. Because of the qualities you exhibit first of all within the family, then in the community. It's the activities that you initiate that raises the standard of the community. And it's not just [for] you (Interview, June 20, 1996).

As part of the Zulu communal ethic, praises and praise names were given to family and community members to consolidate one's connections with the community (as well as the desire to "raise the standard of the community"). Goodie explained the impact of being given a praise name. She told me that her birth name Noma Gugu meaning "my favourite" was changed into the praise name "Goodie" by her family.

This renaming by her aunts and uncles affirmed the social memory of the Msimanga's and Sillio's (Goodie's matrilineal family) in relation to the expectations they upheld for the young. Goodie understood this to mean that they were to "become and do good" by "being achievers in and for the community" (Interview, June 3, 1996: 1). These assertions situate the social memory of Goodie's family history. During the nineteenth century Natal was a British Colony. The colonial state had set aside reserved land that developed into mission stations. Goodie's fore-family settled on two such mission stations, her father's people were among the Tshabalala's at Lady Smith, while her mother's people, the Msimang's and the Sililo's were at Edendale. Christianization and missionary education facilitated their prosperous transition to the colonial economy. The expectation they conveyed in renaming Noma Gugu (Goodie) expressed both the family's sense of material success (developed out of their position as middle class after the transition to the colonial political economy) and their sense of African continuities and accountability to the community.

Goodie's praise name formed an important aspect of her self-concept and self-definition which she developed in relation to the community. This came through when she said: "I've worked really hard to keep that name" (Interview, June 3, 1996: 2). In describing the internal relational process she underwent as a receiver of a praise name, Goodie said she started to envision herself according to the attributes prescribed by the praise. Gunner and Gwala (1991) add much to my attempts to understand how praises were intimately tied to Goodie's self-understanding and identity:

> Praising ... shows the desire for marking the personality concerned, thus giving his [or her] life meaning by names which become the essence of the person. What is also involved is a two-way process,

> knowing and using the praises of others and knowing oneself the same way.... (1991: 18)

Goodie's understanding of her mother Dudu's self-concept and self-definition also centred on the notion of self-empowerment through one's connection to the community. Dudu was given a special status in the family as the first born girl. As "Nkosazane" (her praise name), she was endowed with the title of head of the family or "queen of the family" (Interview, June 20, 1996: 25).

Gunner and Gwala (1991) support the view that "the act of praising focuses on identifying a person, embodying his or her personality through the process of naming..." (1991: 3-4). In this way, "praises relate to individual self-esteem" and self-concept on one hand, and the development of a sense of empowerment through one's attachment to the family and community on the other (1991: 44). According to Goodie, for Dudu, carrying the title "queen of the family", was directed toward affirming a positive self esteem, but was also tied to a familial expectation of responsibility to her younger sisters and brother (Interview, June 20, 1996: 25). It was expected that she would achieve self-reliance and independence for group purposes - in order to ensure the survival of the family members.

For Goodie and her mother, dignifying their praise name entailed honouring what Mazizi Kunene terms a "social ethic" (1982: xi). That is, it was expected that this responsibility toward others in her family, would then be taken into the community and developed into a sense of accountability to the community as othermother. One's work relative to this communal role within the community become part of the "lineage Izibongo".

Kunene (1970) points out that Zulu literature embodied within the individual praise name or praise poetry, like most African literature, is communal. Individual praises coexist and were augmented by those praises extended to members of the lineage through "lineage Izibongo," According to Kunene, Zulu oral literature of lineage Izibongo records the deeds of the ancestors (1970: 9). The lineage Izibongo provides ancestral role models for the young. In reciting the lineage Izibongo, "the fore[mothers] of the living individual, are through their naming being invoked and summoned" (Gunner & Gwala, 1991: 4). Such praises to the ancestors of the lineage were specifically created for those individuals:

> Whose actions have approximated the social ideal...who are deserving in a higher order of being ... [who] by their heroic examples, established standards of moral excellence which succeeding generations are expected to emulate.... (Kunene, 1982: xii)

Those individuals known as the "Beautiful Ones," the "Blind Ones," the "Great Ones," (Kunene, 1982: xi) had lived what was considered the highest

virtue which supported the Zulu communal organization: "self-sacrifice on behalf of the community" (Kunene, 1970: 110). Knowledge of these heroic acts provides role models for the young which are conveyed in order to challenge and inspire the present generation to achieve as much and excel (Kunene, 1982: xv). Gunner and Gwala highlight the "way in which the language of praise names and greetings moves between present and past and provides a bonding and sense of belonging between present and past generations" (1991: 36).

Gunner and Gwala's (1991) analysis of this bonding between generations suggests that the link with the ancestors nourishes the notion of one's attachment to the community and sustains the sense of communal responsibility. Hence self-concept development, self-definition and character development are dynamically connected to one's link with the community and a notion of accountability to the community.

Reshaping the oral genre of praises into storytelling: a praxis for Black women's leadership

The fluidity of the oral genre of praises and praise names and praise poetry (Gunner & Gwala, 1991: 2) allows for its reshaping and extension into storytelling. The indigenous ethic of social responsibility to the community were woven through the stories Goodie's mother told to her. During my second interview with Goodie, I asked the question: What was the driving force behind your community leadership abilities? (Interview, June 20, 1996: 25) She responded by recounting the influence her mother had through the stories Dudu herself told about her own activism. According to Goodie, her mother's work did not just end in the community, she also came home and talked about it. These narratives of struggle, survival and resistance socialized Goodie as the listener/daughter toward activism in her own life.

I asked Goodie to share one such story with me. I have named it "Censoring Black Women's Presence: Relegation to the Gallery." At a later point in this section, I will attempt to analyze this story in depth, but for now I want to discuss how Goodie's testimony of this particular incident assisted me in constructing the diagram titled "Storytelling: A Praxis for Black Women's Leadership" (see Figure 1). "Censoring Black Women's Presence: Relegation to the Gallery" illustrates the transformative possibilities storytelling holds for the listening daughter. I demonstrate these connections (see Figure 1) as follows:

- A storytelling dialogue conveyed *the praxis (thought and action)* which Goodie witnessed in her mother's community leadership. It is the site for the development of self-definition and self-knowledge which resists racial oppression and nurtures an ethic of cultural accountability to one's own community.
- The point at the end of the arrow (on the second level) to the left of the diagram, shows the *critical thought processes* Black women con-

Figure 1:

Storytelling As a Praxis for the Development of Black Women's Community Leadership

Praxis (Thought and Action)
•developed in supportive women to women relations

Critical Thought Processes

Conveyed through:

•narrative constructed of everyday lived experience

•communal role identities or Black-women centred epistemology

•oppositional consciousness

•dialectic of oppression & activism

Action & Activism

Arising out of Black women-centered epistemology:

•is a demonstration of the process of finding voice and self-empowerment through one's work in and for the community

•is a testimony of Black women's exertion of self-definition

Storytelling: A Context for Adolescent Female Socialization

Assists adolescents and/or daughter to:
•cultivate/develop self-definition, critical voice and community leadership

struct from their everyday lived experiences within the various communal role identities. A standpoint of opposition to dominance and the dialectic of oppression and activism are conveyed at this location.

•The point at the end of the arrow (on the second level) on right side of the diagram, shows the resulting *action and activism* produced within the communal role identities of community othermother, cultural worker and community activist. It represents the process of finding voice and self-empowerment through the service one does for the community. Black woman's community activism is a testimony of her exertion of a self-definition which resists subscribed notions of Black women as nameless and voiceless.

•The productive ends the oral genre of storytelling serve come into fruition as *storytelling provides a context for adolescent female socialization* and assists the listener/daughter to be able to locate her own voice of resistance within the struggles of the community. I indicate this in the bottom level of the figure. Storytelling assists the listening daughter in cultivating both the thought and action-central for the development of self-definition, critical voice and community leadership.

This diagram results from the story below which, as mentioned before, I named: "Censoring Black Women's Presence: Relegation to the Galleries." Goodie:

> As part of her work developing the community, my mother visited the women's auxiliary meetings at White churches to learn what these organizations were doing. When she entered the church building, she was immediately told to sit in the gallery, because she couldn't sit with White women. (Interview, June 20, 1996: 25)

To that demeaning experience, Goodie said of Dudu:

> She didn't care. That didn't take her away from her objective. She planned to take that information back with her and build in her own community. A plaque engraved with her name, remains mounted on the wall of the local church to this day. It was put there as a remembrance of the work she did for the church and for the community. (June 20, 1996: 25)

This story conveys how oppressive racial discourses have historically been a part of everyday interactions between White and Black people in South Africa. It reflects Black women's location in the wider society as silenced, suppressed and relegated to the lowest level. However, there is a double element

of meaning that Dudu transpired to Goodie in telling this story. While the decision to stay (in the gallery) and be silenced is seen and understood by the oppressor as Black women's submissiveness and acceptance to White superiority, an inner self-reflective unobserved response operates in this story. Dudu's continued presence, in spite of the conditions of repression demonstrate her expression of a self-constructed knowledge which would not be persuaded or defined by societal denigrated definitions of Black women.

Collins (1991) describes this ability to be able to negotiate and reconcile with the contradictions between how we view ourselves and the denigrated location of Black women, as essential for Black women's survival:

> The struggle of living two lives, one for them and one for ourselves creates a peculiar tension to extract the definition of one's true self from the treatment afforded the denigrated categories in which all Black women are placed. (1991: 94)

The diagram "Storytelling as a Praxis for the Development of Black Women's Leadership" shows that the storytelling genre not only provides a context for a Black woman to critically extract and assert her own self-definition; it also, provides several important lessons for the listener/daughter. These lessons support the development of a Black women's standpoint of resistance to domination. Storytelling provides the context for the listener/daughter to learn how to become critical of a denigrated racialized location in society; further than that, it demonstrates how to resist subjugation by locating and naming it; and finally, how to develop the self-reflective thinking skills involved in critically reinventing herself from the margins, in opposition to exterior definitions.

Storytelling conveys both the thought processes Black women construct of their every day experiences and their conscious movement from object to subject. By conveying Black women's experiences in the dialectical location of oppression and activism, and the development of her opposition to dominance, storytelling provides the thought and action for listener/daughter to learn how to become an actor in history.

"Censoring Black Women's Presence: Relegation to the Gallery" describes how Dudu used the oral genre of storytelling to socialize her daughter for social responsibility and leadership. In this story we see how Dudu's creative energy became applied to authoring stories of her "deeds" or activism in the community. In the female bonding relationship of storytelling, mother presented to daughter the description of herself "acting upon the world even when [her] subjectivity was denied" (Weiler, 1988: 62) by Eurocentric hegemony. Dudu's stories were composed as self-praises in the way that Kunene explains it below:

> Almost every member of society has [her] "praise-poem" which is either given to [her] or made by [her]self about [her] deeds. If [she]

> makes a praise about [her]self, this is not self-praise in the individualistic sense, but an appeal for social approval for the contributions made to society... It is on the basis of an awareness of obligations expected by the community that the individual composes [her] poem; thus [her self] "praise" is an affirmation of a social ethic (1970: 12-13).

Dudu's storytelling relationship with Goodie urged Goodie toward developing a self-definition in relation to family and community struggles. These teachings converge with what Black feminists refer to as the "utility of Black women's relationships with one another in providing a community for Black women's activism and self-determination" (Collins, 1991: 4). A notion of self-determination allows us to place both our individual and our collective concern of the community at the centre of our agenda. Storytelling in the mother and daughter dyad relationship and Black women's connection with each other as community workers nurture and sustain the community struggle for social justice and racial upliftment.

Conclusion

In this paper, I explored how Black feminist communal role identities of community othermother, cultural worker and community activist, as described by Black feminists have assisted Black women in their struggle for survival in racist South African society. I contextualized how these roles are understood within South African oral traditions of praise poetry. I also established how women's actions relative to these communal role identities have created distinct Black female spheres of influence in the community.

The mother and daughter dyad relationship provides the social context for conveying the interconnections between these communal role identities. For instance, in the role of cultural worker, Dudu provided the stories that communicated the grounded experiences of her role in moving the community forward. These stories conveyed Black women's standpoint of opposition to dominance. This standpoint arises out of Black women's response at the dialectical location of oppression and activism. Female spheres of influence, such as women's organizations and the mother and daughter storytelling dyad, provided the social contexts for daughter to see the female self as an actor. This role modelling influenced Goodie's growing vision, desire and ability to act toward changing the inequalities in the community rather than simply complying with assimilating and reproducing the social order. "Storytelling as a Praxis for the Development of Black Women's Community Leadership" details how the storytelling genre in woman to woman supportive relations assisted in the development of Goodie's activist position in life. In "Black Girls/ Black Women-Centered Texts and Black Teachers as Othermothers" (Mogadime, 2000), I describe the uses of storytelling for Goodie's BAG (Black adolescent girls) Drama Group and think through the maternal lessons that Black

feminists writers provide for their reading audience in a similar manner as does the diagram "Storytelling as Praxis."

References

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1991. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment.* New York: Routledge.

Burstein Handler, Janet. 1996. *Writing Mothers, Writing Daughters: Tracing The Maternal In Stories By American Jewish Women.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Gunner, Liz and Mafika Gwala. 1991. *Musho! Zulu Popular Praises.* East Lansing: Michigan State University.

hooks, bell. 1990. *Yearning Race, Gender and Cultural Politics.* Toronto: Between the Lines.

hooks, bell. 1992. *Black Looks: Race and Representation.* Toronto: Between the Lines.

Kunene, Mazisi. 1970. *Zulu Poems.* New York: Africana.

Kunene, Mazisi. 1982. *The Ancestors and the Sacred Mountain.* Ibadan Nairobi: Heinemann.

Mogadime, Dolana. 1997. *A Daughter's Praise Poem for Her Mother: The Life History and Teaching Practice of South African/Canadian Educator Goodie Tshabalala Mogadime.* Unpublished Master of Education Thesis. York University.

Mogadime, Dolana. 1998a. "The Work of South African-Canadian Educator Goodie Tshabalala Mogadime." *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 17 (4): 98-102.

Mogadime, Dolana. 1998b. "A Daughter's Praise Poem for Her Mother: Historicizing South African Women's Community Activism and Racial Upliftment." *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 18 (2/3): 86-91.

Mogadime, Dolana. 2000. Black Girls/Black Women-Centered Texts and Black Teachers as Othermothers" *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 2 (2): 222-233.

Radford-Hill, Sheila. 1986. "Considering Feminism as a Model for Social Change." *Feminist Studies/ Critical Studies.* Teresa de Lauretis, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 157-172.

Weiler, Kathleen. 1988. *Women Teaching For Change: Gender, Class and Power.* New York: Bergin & Garvey.

Wilentz, Gay. 1992. *Binding Cultures: Black Women Writers in Africa and the Diaspora.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kim A. Morrison

Building Bridges of Friendship
Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting

The women of the Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting (IGU) group draw on their identities as grandmothers to build bridges of understanding, respect, and friendship across boundaries of race and generation. This paper explores important intersections among gender, race, class, age, and cultural and family identity through an examination of older women's friendships within IGU. An oral historical approach draws on the life experiences of IGU members to provide insights about specific social institutions and cultural processes that have facilitated and hindered friendships. The women of IGU build bridges of friendship upon the common ground of "grandmotherhood" and then use their friendships to take a family-based identity beyond the private sphere to the public through community activism. The Grandmothers enhance their ability to choose friendship across societal boundaries by creating opportunities for interaction within a respectful environment. Taking their friendships into the public crosses societal boundaries and is a political statement. The Grandmothers' ability to provide and receive support is a critical component of their friendships. The Grandmothers perceive themselves as both benefiting and providing benefits within their friendships, creating a sense that their relationships are based on who they are, not just what they give. This paper challenges assumptions about gender, identity and women's friendships and explores the interconnectedness of gender, race and age as demonstrated in the Grandmother's intercultural friendships.

The women of the "Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting" (IGU) group draw on their identities as grandmothers to build bridges of understanding, respect, and friendship across boundaries of race and generation. This paper examines important intersections between gender, race, class, age, and cultural and family identity through an examination of elderly women's friendships within

IGU. IGU is a network of Saskatchewan First Nations, Métis, and other Canadian older women. Historically, many women belonging to these groups have lived side by side without ever interacting. Building relationships between the groups is of increasing importance given Saskatchewan's aging population, the growth of Aboriginal populations and migration to urban centres.

An oral historical approach draws on the life experiences of IGU members to provide insights about specific social institutions and cultural processes that have facilitated and hindered friendships. The women of IGU build bridges of friendship upon the common ground of "grandmotherhood" and then use their friendship to take a family-based identity beyond the private sphere to the public through community activism. In this paper I challenge assumptions about gender, identity and women's friendship and explore the interconnectedness of gender, race and age as demonstrated in the Grandmothers' intercultural friendships.

Context

At the core of IGU are Gatherings conducted in an atmosphere of respect. Gatherings are held in spring and fall with projects and workshops organized throughout the year. A Project Working Council (PWC) composed of volunteers representing their participant groups meets to make consensus decisions about the group's activities and direction. Administrative functions are carried out by a coordinator employed by the University of Regina Senior's Education Centre.

Although I will use the term "Grandmothers" to refer to the research participants, the women who attend the Grandmother's Gatherings are not a homogenous group. Like any group of women, IGU is composed of a vast array of individuals with differing backgrounds, cultures and life experiences. However, the PWC and the women I talked to individually use the term "Grandmothers" to describe themselves and the other women in the group and encouraged me to do the same.

When the Grandmothers get together they gather in a circle. To start Gatherings, Kate, a Cree Elder and a member of the PWC, offers a prayer to the Creator in Cree. Then Laura, a Euro-Canadian Grandmother, also on the PWC, offers a prayer in English. On a table in the centre of the circle are the groups' ceremonial objects that act as symbols of the groups' continuity. The objects include a tatting made by Laura, a drum and a candle. The candle stands in as a replacement for burning sweetgrass as negotiated by the Grandmothers when a long-time member was going to have to leave the circle due to an allergy to sweetgrass smoke. Kate offered the group use of the Talking Rock tradition and it has become an important part of their process. A Talking Rock is passed around the circle in the direction the sun moves across the sky and whoever has the rock can speak about whatever they wish. Gatherings are usually held over two days with the Grandmothers staying in the facility and sharing meals

together. The Grandmothers' Gatherings take place within the context of Saskatchewan's intercultural relations.

Intercultural relationships in Saskatchewan have a complex history that I can only sketch in a paper of this length. Jim Miller, in *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* (1989), describes early relationships between Europeans and First Nations people as cooperative but by the nineteenth century white settlers were taking more and more of the resources and began viewing the First Nations people as an impediment to expansion. This led to a "coercive policy of land acquisition and directed cultural change" (Miller, 1989: 273-74), including the use of forced residential schooling for First Nations children. Constance Deiter in her 1999 book, *From Our Mothers' Arms: The Intergenerational Impact of Residential Schools in Saskatchewan*, found that the assimilation program has caused, among other things, a loss of parenting skills, identity and self-esteem, as well as the "vilification of [First Nations] culture and language" (78-79). It is an understatement to say that First Nations people have been mistreated at the hands of the settlers who have come to their lands. Today's intercultural relationships exhibit the strain of this history. Furthermore, the damages of the residential schools are believed to have contributed to increased social problems in First Nations communities (Deiter, 1999: 78). As a result, there is a large disparity in social status indicators with incomes, employment and life expectancy statistics being far lower for First Nations people. While First Nations are moving to re-establish self-government, positions of social power in Saskatchewan are still held primary by those considered as white. Women in Intercultural Grandmothers used the word "segregation" to describe how we live our lives in the same province, but yet do not interact. Segregation and other social factors make choosing friendship difficult.

Choosing friendship

Echoing other researchers, Willard Hartup found that "societal forces frequently restrict friendship opportunities to individuals who resemble one another...friendships derive only partly from choice" (1993: 14). Roger Hewitt (1986) argued that structural racism prevented inter-racial friendship and even intervened to end long established friendships between adolescents in inter-racial London neighbourhoods. Choosing to hold onto the differences of power enforced through structural racism can prevent the formation of friendship.

Adele, a Euro-Canadian immigrant woman, was the only interview participant to declare that she has not made any friends in the IGU and in fact has not made any friends since her arrival in Canada after World War II. She faults Canada's mix of races and uses words like "savages," "uncivilized," "uncultured," and "stupid" to describe the women of all races she has met in Canada. Her belief that she is of higher status than the other women she meets echoes traditional imperialist views and has prevented her from forming any friendships. Expressing the same point but from a vastly different perspective,

Mary, a First Nations woman, claimed that an attitude of superiority was a barrier to interracial friendships. She thinks that the friendships in the Intercultural Grandmothers Group work because everyone is treated as an equal. In contrast to Adele, she sees herself as having formed several friendships in IGU. Respecting each individual as equal simply by virtue of their humanity supports the development of friendship.

Researchers who place a greater emphasis on choice support Mary's view. For example Mary Hunt, in her 1991 book, *Fierce Tenderness*, described friendship as a way for "good people to choose to live in right relation" (4). Similarly, Neera Badhwar claimed that friendship goes beyond attraction or proximity, it "is a practical and emotional relationship that arises from and is sustained by, choice" (1993: 5). The Grandmothers enhance their ability to choose friendship across societal boundaries by creating opportunities for interaction within a respectful environment.

Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting actively brings together women of different cultures, races and classes as well as creating opportunities for older people and youth to meet. Claiming the identity of a grandmother enables the women of IGU to bridge their differences. During our interview, Mary, a First Nations grandmother, told me that being a grandmother is "like its no, its no, uh nationality, you know. You are a grandmother, you're a Grandmother. You know! You all have something in common." The Grandmothers consider any loving and caring person a Grandmother and they carry an attitude of care and affection with them into their interactions.

The desire to make friends and learn from others allows them to bring people together who might not otherwise interact and in that coming together look beyond stereotypes to the individual. At a camp retreat held with Grandmothers and at-risk youth one of the youth said, "I thought old people were just...old. But they're really cool!" and the Grandmothers found their friendships across generations "enriching." An interest in youth has taken the Grandmothers into schools to model intercultural friendship, to parenting groups to support young mothers and into communities through the development of a violence prevention program for girls. One Grandmother, Eleanor, thinks that children and youth are comfortable with Grandmothers because they represent safety. "No one's scared of a Grandmother," she says, playing on common stereotypes even though she realizes that there are all kinds of Grandmothers. Janice Raymond believed women, in choosing friendships, "claim social and political status for their Selves and others like their Selves" (1986: 9). In the case of the Grandmothers, "others like their Selves" are fellow loving and caring people. Beyond the activities the Grandmothers carry out, simply declaring another woman as friend or being seen with her in public is a political act. The political power of public friendship is enhanced when societal boundaries are crossed as was illustrated in a story told by one of the Intercultural Grandmothers group coordinators.

This story centres on a murder that occurred in Regina, a city with a large

Aboriginal population. Two young, white, middle-class men murdered a young, poor, Aboriginal woman, Pamela George. When the trial began, the Intercultural Grandmothers took turns going to sit with Pamela George's mother, Ina. Here is the story as told to me:

> Pamela George, was murdered.... Eventually the two men who killed her went on trial, and when her trial, when Pamela George's trial came up which was *two years* after the incident, uh, three or four of the Regina Grandmothers, and that would mean at least three of them would be white, went to the courthouse and sat with Ina George ... to demonstrate their support to a mother who had lost her daughter.
>
> They didn't know this woman, but they did that out of many motivations, but certainly one of the motivations was because the media kept flaunting, naming this woman as a prostitute.
>
> And they said, "This woman who was killed was a *daughter* and a mother. And she *has* a *mother* who is in court, you know, *grieving* and calling for justice for this daughter."
>
> So they went there to stay with her! To demonstrate their commitment to human life and one of the most amazing things about it was that one of the grandmothers who went to sit was a good friend of one of the grandfathers of one of the young men who was alleged to be, and then convicted, so *those*, uh, powerful acts, I call them "Bearing Witness Acts" you know, they are certainly powerful acts of human solidarity.... Crossing boundaries, *Crossing Boundaries*, [then quickly] crossing boundaries, crossing boundaries, crossing boundaries!

This story gave me goose bumps and moved me almost to tears when I heard it. It is a graphic illustration of the power of friendship and what can be done when friendship provides the courage to cross boundaries. The Grandmothers drew on their collective identity as Grandmothers and their friendship to offer support and friendship to a stranger they felt was in need. The Grandmother who was the first to sit with Ina told me that the faces of Pamela's male relatives lifted to see support offered across race and to realize that not all white people devalued Pamela. Intercultural friendship provided a powerful political message across societal boundaries.

Choice is extended beyond the initial decision to make friends. Friendship must be maintained by a choice to continue to act as a friend. Eleanor, a Euro-Canadian woman living in a small town, felt it was important to display her choice of friendship by saying hello to, and chatting with, her First Nations friends when she saw them downtown, in contrast to accepted norms of the community.

> *So when I see them on the street I always make acknowledgement and they'd all look a little embarrassed but they don't anymore ... they seem to feel freer*

to say hello and the other morning we had tea and gabbed.

The importance of the Euro-Canadian women approaching First Nations women was emphasized by Ursula, a First Nations Grandmother living in Regina. She told me she appreciates the white women's friendliness and that their approaching her and starting conversations had enabled her to make friendships. Eleanor has also chosen to accept invitations to attend First Nations events and to reciprocate by inviting First Nations women she has met to her home. She is concerned about segregation in her community and believes her choice to reach across racial boundaries demonstrates her friendship with the First Nations women. Her willingness to transgress unspoken social boundaries is a political act. Her sentiments speak to the agency of women who choose, act and commit to themselves, to each other and to their friendship.

Another choice that maintains friendships is the decision to deal with conflict. The existence of conflict or disappointment does not preclude the possibility of friendship; in fact many believe that surviving conflict strengthens a friendship. I have been told of an incident early in the group's formation where some of the First Nations women complained the Euro-Canadian women were rude for interrupting dinner conversation. The Euro-Canadian women, on the other hand, felt the First Nations women were rude for not wanting to stop talking to pass food. The Grandmothers openly discussed the conflict using their Talking Rock while sitting in their circle and came to understand that neither group was rude, but rather had different dining customs. Leaving these different expectations unacknowledged could result in disappointment for all parties, particularly given that the group has, as one of its central goals, bridging cultural gaps and these conflicts are clearly rooted in cultural traditions and expectations.

Support

"Throughout adulthood, women turn to their close friends for personal, emotional, and affective support" (Roberto, 1996: 55). Use of the word "support" attempts to distill many friendship functions into one category. Clearly, the friendship characteristics detailed in providing "personal, emotional, and affective support" are vast. As a result, this discussion of support will encompass a number of areas of friendship that very well could have been considered on their own. Researchers tend to agree that women appreciate support from their friends and provide support to their friends. The explanations for this vary. In one of the many incarnations of the nature versus nurture debate, support is often conflated with nurturing and attributed to either an essential nature of women (Block & Greenberg, 1985) or the socialization process (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988). The focus of this section is the manifestation of support in the friendship relationships of the Grandmothers.

Related to support is the issue reciprocity. In friendship literature, reciprocity indicates an equal exchange of benefits between friends. Many definitions of friendships refer to the importance of a reciprocal arrangement (Duck, 1991; Reisman, 1979; Roberto, 1996; Stern-Gillet, 1995). Neera Badhwar, for example, stated that friendships are relationships of "mutual and reciprocal goodwill, trust, respect, and love or affection" (1993: 3) and Janice Raymond similarly noted that friendship "involves certain reciprocal assurances based on honor, loyalty and affection" that results in the individuals expecting mutuality or reciprocity (1986: 9). Underlying the emphasis on reciprocity is the belief that, without it, one party in the relationship is taking advantage of the other and a true friendship does not exist. The Grandmothers valued reciprocal support and this carried into their friendships.

One of the main ways the Grandmothers demonstrated both support and reciprocity is through sharing and listening. Interestingly, listeners often see sharing as the gift and sharers see listening as the gift! Mutual benefits and appreciation make sharing and listening a perfect example of reciprocity and was identified by many of the Grandmothers as a critical component of their friendship. "We do a lot of sharing. Sharing's a very big part of our getting together," says Lee, a Euro-Canadian grandmother. Mary, a First Nations grandmother described a different circle that is composed of First Nation women but she felt was very similar to IGU.

> *Anyway, we go these gatherings every once a month and I like doing that because we share. We share the good things and we share the bad things...And the Grandmothers, too, it's very open, you feel very much at ease. Although they're (pause) I'll call them whites, uh? Yeah, whites. Yeah, we all, its, I learn we all have the same (pause) same feelings no matter what nationality you are the Grandmothers go through the same things, exactly the same things. We go through the hardships. We go through, we're stronger for it.*

Jean, a Euro-Canadian grandmother, echoed Mary's sentiments. Jean has been part of IGU since it began and was part of the older woman's network that preceded it. For Jean, each gathering has a mixture of old friends from the previous network, what she describes as her "anti-nuke" days, new friends she has met at previous gatherings and strangers who are attending their first gathering. She marvels at the fact that, in spite of this mixture, women, including her, feel free to share with the group and receive their support:

> *There is something about how we can sit with complete and total strangers, both um, um, First Nations people and, and those who are not. And we share things that we maybe haven't even told our children and our grandchildren! And its just, we like to talk. And because there's, um, kinds of revelations that we hold forth are confidential, but it's just incredible to me that you leave there feeling that these people have just, have been your*

> *friends longer than that couple of days you're with them and that they will be always.*

Both Mary and Jean struggle over the appropriate terminology, "white" or "First Nations," to use in discussing the groups. They seem to be concerned that they do not cause offence. Moreover, they think of the women as friends and Grandmothers and have to pause to re-categorize them into cultural groups. Lee attributes the comfort the women feel with each other across boundaries of race to the safe and secure environment created by the group.

> *Yeah, they're [the Grandmothers] safe and secure ... and some of them got in there and really shared some of their innermost concerns. Because we always went around the circle, like the first day with the rock. And some of them had a lot of problems, but they were willing to share and they knew that this sharing wasn't going any further. That was one of the things we did. Confidential. Everything was confidential.*

The environment that allowed for the exchange of sharing and support was created and supported by IGU's guidelines and the ritual of the Talking Rock. Guidelines, such as those pertaining to affirmation and confidentiality create a climate suitable for sharing. The women know that their disclosures are safe, both from ridicule and from gossip.

The importance of the opportunity to share life stories must be emphasized. As Eleanor said, "So you learn your life story, a lot of them, I think it's the only time they've ever had the opportunity to, to cry out their story. And that comes with a lot of tears lots of times. That's a release it's important." Sharing is not only an opportunity for others to learn about your life, rather, people discover their own life story in telling it to others. It is almost as if the sharing and being heard makes it possible to make sense of a life experience that until then had been a source of anxiety and guilt. The Grandmothers shared several such examples with me. For the first time, Jean was able to share her guilt about having to institutionalize her mother and through that sharing the Grandmothers taught her "that it isn't all that bad to cry." The most dramatic of such incidents occurred when the PWC watched video about residential school abuse in preparation for their literacy workshop. All of the First Nations women at the PWC meeting had attended residential school and several found the video very disturbing.

> *And it was in their generation that, you know, you did not* talk *about those experiences. That was not, that was considered unseemly in, you know? Well the pain that came out of that was just enormous and then we... Well what do you do? When that kind of pain and grief.... What do you do when that arises? And the talking rock helped us every time.* (Sue)

The Talking Rock and the willingness to support those in need allowed women who had experienced and witnessed abuse in the residential school setting to finally speak of that time in their lives. The residential school experience dramatically altered life for these women. Even those grandmothers who told me that they did not experience abuse spoke of loneliness, hunger and harsh treatment that could be characterized as abuse nonetheless. The pain and confusion of that time was kept inside for many years until finally the Grandmothers felt it was safe and allowable to tell of their experiences and express their feelings related to them.

The sharing that occurs in the circles leads to learning which was reinforced at a variety of workshops. Ursula, a First Nations woman living in Regina and raising all seven of her grandchildren on her own, learns a lot from IGU. "It's really helped me quite a bit, too." She is more willing to speak in the group now and appreciates the opportunity to:

> *just to get to understand people, understand how to handle the kids, your children, your grandchildren. And you get to understand how to, uh, how to cooperate with different people, I guess... Well mostly with white people, you know.... We learn a lot from there too, you know. They help us all out, one another.... When you want different answers, like you know, you're stuck on something like that, well they're there to help. To help you with whatever you need and that....*

When I asked Ursula "So do you feel like you get a chance at those meetings to share some of what you learnt with other people too?" she replied,

> *Mmm, mhm, yeah. That's what, that's what they tell us to do, like you know, share what you need and what you learnt from them and all of the different people. So I think we have to do it, like.*

Ursula has recently moved into Regina from the reserve she calls "my good home." She is working hard to raise her grandchildren and also takes time to visit her adult son who has been institutionalized because of physical disabilities. IGU gatherings provide a respite for Ursula where she can rest away from her daily duties and share concerns and knowledge with other Grandmothers.

> *There's a lot of, lot of experiences, like you know. Yeah. I sure got a lot of help anyway. I don't feel so down, like. They always talk to me every time I go to these meetings. If I didn't have that, those meetings and to go along, like, I don't know what I would have been doing now (cough). Like that's helped me quite a bit. Grandmothers, the elders.*

The move to the city has been difficult for Ursula but she finds solace in her friendships at the Grandmothers gatherings. She takes her turn with the

Talking Rock to "give words to the people." I appreciate her use of the word "give." The sharing is a gift, a gift of "words to the people." The ability to give and receive demonstrates the reciprocal nature of the support in IGU.

To Wilma, sharing is an integral part of First Nations culture. As the "s" on the end of "First Nations" implies, there are several nations each with different cultural norms and expectations, but some qualities, such as sharing, are considered common themes.

> *We as Native people share a lot. And that's what helped us.... Of course we, everybody has their problems. But. We work them out. Yeah. Yeah. We find ways and means of workin' it out. Yeah.*

This sharing goes beyond sharing verbally and includes sharing goods and help in time of need. Wilma told me when people on her reserve came to her and her husband for help they would give them "straight half of what we had." The Grandmothers maintain this spirit of sharing. One of the First Nations Grandmothers on the PWC was going through a family crisis during the time I was conducting interviews. She had to miss the Gathering I attended because one of her adult sons had gone missing. The other Grandmothers were very concerned for her, calling to check in on how things were doing and whether she had any news. Apparently this support continued through the entire ordeal.

> *Joyce was going through a very difficult time and she's been with the Project Working Council since the beginning. Uh, her son was missing for three months and those women just kept faithful to her. Ah! I mean, I just, I just think that is, such a testimony to their, well faithfulness! You know, they just kept faith with this woman. They'd drive out [from Regina to the reserve], take lunch, go and sit, go and visit.* (Sue)

Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian grandmothers supported Joyce and often travelled together to visit her. The Grandmothers' ability to both provide and receive support is a critical component of their friendship. Because they feel that they are both benefiting and providing benefits, the Grandmothers feel secure that their relationships are based on who they are not just what they give, which is the essence of reciprocity.

Conclusion

The women of Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting are drawing on their accepted roles as grandmothers to bridge societal gaps in our segregated society by forging friendships across boundaries of race, culture and generation. The atmosphere they create through their choices leads to friendship relationships that offer individual and collective support that serves as a lesson to the generations that follow.

References

Badhwar, Neera K. 1993. "The Nature and Significance of Friendship." *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader.* Ed. Neera K. Badhwar. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Block, Joel, and Diane Greenberg. 1985. *Women and Friendship.* New York: Watts.

Deiter, Constance. 1999. *From Our Mothers' Arms: The Intergenerational Impact of Residential Schools in Saskatchewan.* Toronto: United Church Publishing House.

Duck, S. 1991. Friends for Life: The Psychology of Personal Relationships. New York: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.

Eichenbaum, L., and S. Orbach. 1988. *Between Women: Love, Envy, and Competition in Women's Friendships.* New York: Viking Press.

Hartup, Willard. W. 1993. "Adolescents and Their Friends." *Close Friendships in Adolescence.* Ed. Brett Laursen. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss.

Hewitt, Roger. 1986. *White Talk Black Talk : Interracial Friendship and Communication among Adolescents.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hunt, Mary. 1991. *Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship.* New York: Crossroads.

Miller, Jim. 1989. *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Raymond, Janice. 1986. *A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Reisman, J. 1979. *Anatomy of a Friendship.* New York: Irvington.

Roberto, Karen A., ed. 1996. *Relationships between Women in Later Life.* New York: The Haworth Press.

Stern-Gillet, S. 1995. *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship.* New York: State University Press.

Gisela Norat

Latina Grandmothers
Spiritual Bridges to Ancestral Lands

In Hispanic tradition, biological or surrogate grandmothers commonly serve as stewards of native cultures as influenced by the interactions of European, African and American-Indian peoples after the Spanish Conquest. Spiritual practices not sanctioned by colonial Catholicism and unorthodox healing practices disavowed by the medical establishment survived through the teachings of elders, oftentimes women. While Latino religious traditions rooted in Christianity find equivalents or parallels in Anglo society, the spiritual practices known as curanderismo, espiritismo and santería are unique. This study gleans how contemporary Latina writers depict female-centered spiritualities at work in the United States despite situations where Latinos as a group struggle with cultural displacement and marginalization within Anglo society. Unlike the bizarre abilities of eccentric characters in the literature of Latin American magical realism, the Latina elders discussed in this study practice spiritualities, in part, to steer the next generation toward embracing their ancestry. In this purposeful role, grandmothers and community elders are key figures in promoting acculturation and thus warding off young people's complete assimilation into Anglo society. Not losing connections with ancestral ways of knowing is vital to Latinos who live in an Anglo-dominant society without equivalent practices to validate spiritual aspects of their cultural heritage, hence the importance of grandmothers as active transmitters of culture and promoters of ethnic preservation. In a culture that devalues women, these powerful and wise healers of body and spirit are bridges to ancestral lands.

In Hispanic tradition, *nuestras abuelas*, our grandmothers, have served as stewards of native cultures and spiritualities in lands where European, African and American-Indian religions came into contact and were transformed by the interactions that followed from the Spanish Conquest. Spiritual practices not

sanctioned by colonial Catholicism and unorthodox healing practices disavowed by the medical establishment survived through the oral teachings of elders, oftentimes women (Fernández Olmos, 2001: 10). In the United States a number of Latinos—those identifying with the legacy of Spanish heritage, culture and/or language—respect spiritual and healing practices rooted in ancestral cultures. The storefront *botánica* selling religious and healing paraphernalia, and frequently serving in other ways the spiritual needs of its community, sprouts in any city with a large Latino population.[1]

A *botánica*, "part herb shop and folk clinic, more than a 'poor man's pharmacy' ... a palpable representation of medical *mestizaje*, or syncretism," is frequently run by a wise old woman and caters to the practices known as *curanderismo, espiritismo* and *santería*, which are not new to the United States mainland (Fernández Olmos, 2001: 1). *Curanderismo*, rooted in indigenous practices in the Americas, is frequently female-centered. Among Hispanic groups in the United States the practice of folk healing is associated with Mexicans, whose presence in the American Southwest stems back to when this vast territory was part of Northern Mexico and before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 turned the *mexicanos* living there into marginalized United States citizens as spoils of the U.S. Mexican War.[2] In the twentieth century, labour shortages in the United States during the two World Wars and later political instability, revolutions, economic necessity and natural disasters in areas such as the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America brought different waves of Spanish-speaking people to the United States and with them they transplanted popular belief systems. The spiritual practices that I will focus on here are surviving but remain marginalized within organized religions and mainstream American culture as do their Latino adherents.

From my perspective as a Latina and professor of Latin American literature, the increasing number of Latino writers and scholars publishing in the United States are lifting their groups from cultural anonymity. Across the United States universities and colleges have instituted programs, including Cultural, Ethnic, Latino and Women's Studies, which promote awareness of minority populations and an appreciation for their contributions. Outside academia, the American public is becoming more familiar with the native cultures of Latinos through such popular writers as Julia Alvarez, Sandra Cisneros and Oscar Hijuelos. While Latino religious traditions rooted in Christianity have equivalents or parallels in Anglo society, other spiritual practices are unique.

An example of unorthodox spirituality from the Southern Hemisphere probably memorable to a large and diverse reading public is the clairvoyant grandmother, Clara, in Isabel Allende's first novel, *The House of the Spirits* (1993). The book title itself calls attention to the spiritual realm the elder inhabits. Clara has telepathic gifts, can interpret dreams, predict the future, move objects without touching them, play Chopin on the piano with the cover down and consult spirits with "a three-legged table that gave little jolts

two for yes, three for no" (1993: 109, 255). Clara maintains a life-long relationship with the three Mora sisters, "students of spiritualism and supernatural phenomena," and after death communicates with her granddaughter, Alba, through Luisa Mora (1993: 107, 310). Not surprisingly, "for Alba, the most important person in the house and the strongest presence in her life was her grandmother. She was the motor that drove the magic universe ... of the big house on the corner, where Alba spent her first seven years in complete freedom" (1993: 239).

Within the context of fiction, readers and critics can attribute unexplainable incidents in Allende's novel to the "magical realism" popularized by Noble laureate Gabriel García Márquez during the Latin American literary "boom" of the '60s and '70s.[3] On an international scale Márquez and Allende globalized aspects of Latin American culture that may appear phenomenal to outsiders. Spiritual practices that occupy the realm of "magic" can be found in the writing of United States Latinos as well. Yet unlike Allende's (1993) portrayal of grandmother Clara as bizarre and an embarrassment to the family, the Latina elders discussed here are valued for their practices and for the active role they play in passing on to future generations spiritual beliefs respected within their communities.

Focusing on contemporary literature by Latinas, this study gleans how their writing depicts grandmothers whose spiritual beliefs and practices steer biological and surrogate grandchildren toward embracing their Latino ancestry. This insight about the extended Latino family reveals the value of grandmothers in promoting acculturation and thus warding off complete assimilation into Anglo society.[4] While mothers, especially those within immigrant families, are busy with "the daily work of child rearing or the pressures of combining work with bringing up children," grandmothers are more likely relieved from these concerns and have the time and foresight to share experiences and beliefs that help anchor the young to native cultures (Guzmán Bouvard, 1998: xiv).

As featured in Dolores Pridas' play, *Botánica* (1991), United States-born Latinos and those who emigrated when young frequently voice the inner struggle of straddling two cultures and not fitting completely into either. In the play, Doña Genoveva—a Puerto Rican grandmother and owner of the community's *botánica*—is instrumental in modeling, teaching and passing on spiritual practices to her Americanized granddaughter Milagros, who at college changes her name to Millie and upon her graduation does not want to manage the *botánica* as her family expects. In a crisis, however, Milagros/Millie reconsiders the value of her grandmother's beliefs. Ultimately, Doña Genoveva succeeds in guarding against the younger generation's full assimilation into an American melting pot, which would be realized at the expense of ancestral language and practices.

In *Blessed by Thunder: Memoir of a Cuban Childhood,* Flor Fernández Barrios (1999) presents her grandmother as teacher and guardian of

nontraditional spiritual practices. Notably, the author begins and ends the memoir with a focus on her paternal grandmother, specifically vis-à-vis her role as a respected *curandera* in the native country. The grandmother's influence is central in both the author's upbringing on the island and in reclaiming the Cubanness she had thought lost after years of exile in the United States. The first paragraph of the book explains the title's connection with the circumstances of the author's birth during a thunder storm and the Yoruba deity Changó, associated with power and thunder in the practice of *Santería*.[5] Although Fernández Barrios clarifies that her grandmother was not a priestess in the *Santería* religion—"she was not a santera but she had her favorite orishas" (1999: 235)[6]—the elder was familiar enough with Yoruba deities or *orishas* to interpret that the thunderbolt and consequent power outage during the granddaughter's birth was a sign from Changó ushering the newborn into the world to become a *curandera*, or folk healer.

The first chapter's sole purpose of introducing the grandmother's beliefs and her conviction to groom the granddaughter as apprentice suggests the extent of the elder's influence on the author's life story:

> My name is Flor Teresa, but my Grandmother Patricia always called me Negrita, which means "little black one." It was her way of expressing affection and love for me, her favorite grandchild, the one she believed would carry on the tradition of healing and become a curandera, like her. Therefore, it was her responsibility to prepare me to use this don. Because of these circumstances, Grandmother Patricia was more than just a grandmother to me. She was a protector and a teacher who spent endless hours instructing me in the mysteries of life, from its most mundane aspects ... to the serious subjects of spirituality and healing. (Fernández Barrios, 1999: 3)

Grandmothering as it relates, in this case, to passing on a spiritual tradition models a venue of empowerment for Latinas where the culture's patriarchal strictures subordinates them to men in most other aspects. Given the many centuries in which women have played an important role in folk healing, it is not unusual to find them as proprietors and presiding over healing centers or *botánicas* as in Pridas' play (Fenández Olmos, 2001: 10). Alluding to the respect *curanderas* garner within the community, Flor Fernández Barrios tells the reader: "For me, this story is an important link to my roots—not only to the place of my origin, but to the line of women whose identities were created in a healing practice, in a place *where women were considered wise*" (1999: 3, my emphasis). The "story" is that of her own birth as told by grandmother Patricia, a story of divination only possible within a culture where religious syncretism reconciles the elder's belief in the signs of the African orisha Changó, the intercession of Roman Catholic Saint Teresa in the birthing room, and the healing power of God (1999: 7-8). The Cuban grandmother's experience is an

authentic representation of popular religiosity on the island, which children would typically be exposed to in daily life.

Although the book focuses on the traumatic events that forced the author and her family to seek refuge in the United States and the consequent aftermath of such uprooting, the position afforded this particular grandmother in the opening and concluding chapters suggests the author's high regard for her elder's beliefs. At age 14, before departing from Cuba forever, Fernández Barrios visits her grandmother Patricia who retells the story of her birth and includes advice that the author not only did not forget, but thought worthy of publishing for posterity:

> Your destiny is to become a curandera. Your path is that of the healer. Curanderismo, Negrita, runs in families and you're my blood.... My mother taught me what she knew and the night you were born, I knew you had been chosen by the spirit to be my apprentice ... Someday you will be called to learn about this don, and it will be important for you to hear the call. ... No matter where you go, you must remember my words! (Fernández Barrios, 1999: 8-9)

The author's Afro-Cuban nanny, a *santera,* is also a key person in her cultural development. "In our town, Carmen was well known for her divination and healing powers.... [She] had a special room in the back of our house for her practice" (Fernández Barrios, 1999: 51). From this surrogate grandmother the young Fernández Barrios learns the pantheon of Yoruba deities, their Roman Catholic counterparts, and the food, color, earthly items and divine powers associated with each particular *orisha.* Noting the child's interest, Carmen takes her to a *bembé,* a ritual celebration honoring the *orishas,* where the girl is instructed on the *batáa* drums and witnesses spirit possession of the faithful (1999: 56-58).

Both the biological and surrogate grandmothers surface in the last few chapters of the memoir as spiritual guides to aid the author's self searching as she is about to graduate from college and commit to a career as a doctor. The author's vivid premonition of Carmen's death in Cuba and grandmother Patricia's brief visit with her in the United States allow Fernández Barrios to re-connect with key childhood experiences that had shaped her cultural identity, but which she had disregarded in the quest for assimilation into Anglo society. Reluctant to study medicine, but hesitant to throw away all her scientific training, the author decides to pay attention to the meaning of a dream where she runs out of class in medical school, unable to make an incision into a corpse. Only when she reviews her childhood and admits grandmother Patricia's advice and Carmen's teachings is Fernández Barrios able to integrate her Cuban identity, her cultural persona, and her career calling:

> Finally I felt certain that Western medicine was not my passion ... I

> experienced an insatiable hunger for information on folk healing practices ... Gradually, a clear picture of my vision emerged. The field of psychology began to captivate my heart.... Suddenly an entire world of possibilities was opening up to me. I felt guided by the spirits of Carmen and Grandmother Patricia. I was on my way to rediscovering a tradition in which women healers were able to cut through the body without surgical knives. (1999: 230-231)

The last chapter recounts the death of Grandmother Patricia in Cuba and legitimizes the cultural rebirth of the granddaughter in exile as she prepares to follow in her footsteps. Significantly, Fernández Barrios finally refers to her grandmother as "mi Abuela Patricia" in the last paragraph of the memoir, a gesture that suggests a reclaiming of linguistic ancestry as well (1999: 237).

Applicable to Fernández Barrios and other examples that follow, "Grandmothers' tales are not only oral histories of family but may also serve as models, guiding us and opening up the way for our own becoming" (Guzmán Boudvard, 1998: xv). Mexican-American author Ana Castillo presents in her novel *So Far from God* (1994b) a similar relationship of a *curandera* grooming a young apprentice in spiritual ways of knowing. Although Caridad is not blood kin to Doña Felicia, the old woman looks after her tenant as she would a grandchild. The "tales and oral histories" Doña Felicia volunteers about Mexico, the Revolution, and the hardships of her people on both sides of the U.S. border broadens Caridad's biological family to an ancestral "family" from which the young woman—through the surrogate grandmother—will draw the knowledge to develop faculties for her "own becoming"—a medium and healer respected within Mexican cultural tradition.

The reader first encounters a Caridad who, spurned in love, snubs the code of conduct her Mexican-American community expects of females. When frequenting every bar in the county and not discriminating with whom she "was making it in a pickup off a dark road" eventually lands her in the hospital more dead than alive, the community responds in Roman Catholic tradition: "For those with charity in their hearts, the mutilation of the lovely young woman was akin to martyrdom. Masses were said for her recovery. A novena was devoted to her at the local parish. And ... a dozen old women in black came each night to Caridad's hospital room to say the rosary, to wail, to pray" (Castillo, 1994b: 33). Beyond orthodox Roman Catholic spirituality, the family also accepts Caridad's miraculous recuperation not explained by modern science:

> What was left of Caridad had been brought home after three months in the hospital.... One evening ... movement in the adjacent room caught their eyes at once. [They] saw Caridad walking soundlessly, without seeming to be aware of them, across the room. Furthermore, it wasn't the Caridad that had been brought back from the hospital ... half repaired by modern medical technology, tubes through her

> throat, bandages over skin that was gone, surgery piecing together flesh that was once her ... breasts, but Caridad as she was before.... There was nothing, nothing that anyone could see wrong with her.... (Castillo, 1994b: 37-38)

Once recovered, Caridad decides to live on her own and, as if by fate, rents a trailer from Doña Felicia, "the centennial old woman" who would teach "the last apprentice of her life" all about such common ailments as "empacho and bilis; mal de ojo, caída de mollera, and susto" (Castillo, 1994b: 44, 59, 62). Caridad learns that symptoms "were not only treated with herbs, decoctions, and massages but also with 'limpias'—cleansings ... [which] might range from employing tobacco smoke, an egg, or a live black hen, herbal baths, or sweeping the body with certain branches and incense" (63). For months Caridad observed and assisted the old woman before she was asked to diagnose a "patient" (62). As Lara Medina confirms in her study of Mexican-American women's spiritualities, "contemporary Chicanas, either as self-taught healers or as trained officiates, follow in the footsteps of our foremothers to provide spiritual nourishment for themselves and their communities" (1994b: 189).[7]

Besides passing on the curative practices of healing body and spirit, Doña Felicia's introduces Caridad to traditions—such as the Lenten Week pilgrimage to Chimayo, a sanctuary in the valley of the Sangre de Cristo foothills—that connect the Catholic Church and the beliefs of Native peoples.[8] Given that Caridad grew up in a family too dysfunctional to afford the children this type of religious experience, the old woman's grandmothering helps fill in some gaps in the young woman's spiritual development. Significantly, after the pilgrimage to Chimayo, Caridad disappears for a year, after which she is discovered living in a cave as a hermit. Her "handmade deer-skin moccasins," "jackrabbit pelts" and the bones of small animals explain how she survived in the Sangre Cristo Mountains, but also suggest a life of meditation and communion with nature reminiscent of her Amerindian ancestry (Castillo, 1994b: 86, 91). Hence, the elderly mentor initiates her apprentice in a Lenten pilgrimage that ultimately prompts Caridad to a spiritual retreat necessary to her search for self understanding and her new role as healer: "Caridad's psychic don was fully honed after her return. Her dreams were not hits and misses no more like in the beginning, but very clear messages which, with the help of her mentor, doña Felicia, she became adept at interpreting" (Castillo, 1994b: 118).

Notwithstanding the credit due Caridad for achieving much learning, important too, her apprenticeship under a wise and respected elder in the community, by association, helps the young woman restore her tainted name: "Sometimes Caridad did not even have to dream as a channeler, or as doña Felicia called her, a medium. She often fell into semiconscious trances and communicated with spirit guides as a way of communicating messages to clients. Eventually the word got around and Caridad earned herself a respectable reputation as a medium, if not a miracle worker" (Castillo, 1994b: 119).

Tey Diana Rebolledo suggests the emergence of the *curandera* as a powerful figure in Latino writing because her qualities of myth and spirituality are closely identified with the representation (and I would add the preservation) of culture (1995: 83-84).[9]

Although Ana Castillo presents *So Far From God* (1994b) as fiction, Doña Felicia's grandmothering role in Caridad's spiritual development as link to embracing ancestry reflects a cultural reality the following U.S. Latinos share:[10] A religion originating in Nigeria, "Ifa offers a magical ritual that I feel very comfortable with as a result of my childhood experiences," says Petra Martínez, who owns a *botánica* and whose "great grandmother was a *curandera* and spiritualist" (Medina, 1998: 200-201). Zosi, raised Catholic, practices egg cleansings to purify one's energy, which she learned from her Yaqui grandmother and prays to Our Lady of Guadalupe, as is customary in Mexican Catholicism (Medina, 1998: 201).

Academician Yolanda Broyles-González credits her grandmother of Yaqui descent as chief authority in her essay, "Indianizing Catholicism," and for her own spiritual hybridity:

> My Abuelita felt closest to Guadalupe while tending to the marvelous plants of her garden ... She taught me prayers I never heard in Catholic school, like the prayer to La Santa Sábila, a plant known in English as aloe vera. The powerfully healing *sábila* plant is thought of as a substitute for Jesus as the teacher of the "Apóstoles" (apostles).... For Polita, caring for her assortment of medicinal herbs and flowers was as vital as caring for her nine children, her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and neighbors. Widowed at approximately age twenty-five, she somehow managed to survive and became the spiritual center of a huge family of largely impoverished migrant workers. (2002: 125)

Cuban-born Steve Quintana, a devotee to *Santería* and an ordained priest of Obatalá, "is well known as a ritual leader, diviner/healer, and spokesperson for his religion in the Boston area" (Wexler, 2001: 89). He utilizes spiritual "cloth dolls like those his grandmother and great grandmother had used in their work as spiritualist mediums in Havana" (Wexler, 2001: 90). Quintana recounts:

> I remember my mother working in one of the most expensive stores in Havana. She would leave me with my grandmother and my great grandmother, so I was raised by them as babysitters.... I was aware of being raised in a house where there were spiritual powers in every corner—in a glass of water or a platter of food, in a cup of coffee and a cigar.... I learned how to respect all this and to value the feeding and the taking care of the spirits of the house. (Wexler, 2001: 90-92)

Also Cuban, author Mayra Montero remembers the remarkable influence of the French-born *mulatta* raised in Haiti who introduced her to the "Vodou pantheon" and influenced her "to have increasingly more frequent contacts with the beliefs, liturgies, and poetry of Cuban magic-religious systems." (Montero, 2001: 196-197). Montero's daily childhood experiences reflect a religious hybridity common among colonized peoples:

> In my own home in Havana, in a corner away from the door (so as not to attract the curiosity of visitors), there was always an image of Babalú Ayé, also known as St. Lazarus.... I also remember that we kept in each room, equally hidden from indiscreet gazes, a glass brimming with fresh water, following the suggestions of babalaos and iyalochas, priest and priestesses of Santería, whose opinion was that water so placed "cleared" the environment and soothed the souls of our dead.... Every Sunday my sister and I were adorned with our lace mantillas and taken to the ten o'clock Mass and, in the exquisite Gothic Church of the Sacred Heart we went to confession, took communion, and sang our praises to Mary. There was not the slightest glimpse of guilt or doubt in any of us; we carried syncretism in our blood. (2001: 198)

As referenced thus far, the topic of religious syncretism increasingly has received attention from Latinas living in the United States, perhaps because many identify as *mestiza* and as such seek to understand themselves from the intercessions where Spanish, Indian and Anglo cultures merge and digress (Anzaldúa, 1987: 82). Their consideration may also be due to feminist interest in exploring and documenting women's history. Ana Castillo contends that "women's history is one of religiosity," not typically as originators of cults and religions, but often as conveyers who pass on faith and spiritual practices from generation to generation (Castillo, 1994a: 145)—not necessarily interpreted to mean a passive role vis-à-vis patriarchal dominance.

The *curandera* and *santera* are powerful figures not only for their ability to heal body and spirit—the positive side of the craft—but for their capacity to seek revenge and destruction for social evils; hence these typically benevolent women can turn into *la bruja,* the witch (Rebolleda, 1995: 88). In a culture that subordinates and devalues women, the potential to "control her own life and destiny as well as that of others" makes the *curandera* and *santera* an attractive figure for Latina writers (Rebolleda, 1995: 88). As a mestiza Ana Castillo considers herself descendant from "a long and endless line of non-valued human beings, born to servitude and to pay homage to a higher order, and we fit into the present schema for the sole purpose of continuing that anonymous line of labor. Any act that we commit that does not serve that purpose is an act of insurrection to the system" (Castillo, 1994a: 147).

Chayo in Sandra Cisneros' "Little Miracles, Kept Promises" (1992) would agree with Castillo's assessment of Chicanas' status in the social hierarchy, but

the protagonist sets out to combat the dictates that have kept her female ancestors in subservient roles. Chayo's "insurrection" entails studying art at the university and becoming independent. Following Mexican-American tradition, Chayo petitions the Virgin of Guadalupe to grant her prayer and leaves a token gift: "I leave my braid here and thank-you for believing what I do is important. Though no one else in my family, no other woman, neither friend nor relative, no one I know, not even the heroine in the *telenovelas*, no woman wants to live alone" (Cisnero, 1992: 127). Chayo's prayer to the Virgin fits the religious syncretism noted thus far in that—though anchored in Catholic practice as once instilled by the colonizer—she is really petitioning an indigenous ancestral goddess.

Claiming the indigenous in the Virgin of Guadalupe is redemptive since Chayo had long rejected Catholicism because it sets as model the suffering and self-sacrificing woman replicated by generations of women in her family: "Virgencita de Guadalupe. For a long time I wouldn't let you in my house ... I couldn't look at your folded hands without seeing my *abuela* mumbling, 'My son, my son, my son ...' Couldn't look at you without blaming you for all the pain my mother and her mother and all our mothers' mothers have put up with in the name of God" (Cisnero, 1992: 127).

Chayo embraces the religious devotion of her women kin once she looks beyond the Virgin as Catholic icon sanctioned by the colonizer and contemplates the empowering spirituality of her colonized, but not vanquished Amerindian ancestors:

> When I learned your real name is Coatlaxopeuh, She Who Has Dominion over Serpents, when I recognized you as Tonantzín, and learned your names are Teteoinnan, Toci, Xochiquetzal, Tlazolteotl, Coatlicue, Chalchiuhtlicue, Coyolxauhqui, Huixtocihuatl, Chicomecoatl, Cihuacoatl, when I could see you as Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro, Nuestra Señora de San Juan de los Lagos ... I wasn't ashamed, then, to be my mother's daughter, my grandmother's granddaughter, my ancestors' child. (Cisnero, 1992: 128)

The reconciliation with her foremothers implies Chayo's "indianizing Catholicism," that is, recognizing the disguises native forms of worship were forced to undergo in order to survive (Broyles-González, 2002: 120). In a more circuitous way than other cases noted here, Chayo finds that the religiosity of her grandmothers is the link to her discovery of a heritage that will empower her as a Chicana. By "changing the deity's image from mediator to one of agency and power" Chayo debunks "the masculine discourse around her myth" and is able to recuperate the Virgin in her own mestiza and feminist image (Kafka, 2000: 91). As Broyles-González points out about Latino spiritual tradition,

> *Mujeres* (women) are the chief transmitters of spiritual practices in the home, and to the seven generations, while also often serving as the chief mediators between the home and external religious institutions and sites, be they the Catholic church, religious pilgrimages, spiritual pageants such as Posadas, or at wakes as *rezadoras* (ones who pray), whose prayers help move the deceased to a place of rest. (2002: 117)

Implicit in the connections Chayo has uncovered, she will unlikely assimilate into Anglo society to the extent of abandoning her foremothers' culture.

For Latinos, grandmothers are often more active transmitters of native culture than busy mothers. In the writings discussed, the elders' role in ethnic preservation is especially noticeable in the realm of spiritual practices handed down orally through the generations. In this respect, grandmothers nurture body and soul in a syncretism that parallels the spiritual practices in which they mix Catholicism and non-European belief systems. Not losing connections with ancestral ways of knowing is vital to Latinos who live in an Anglo dominant society without equivalent practices to validate spiritual aspects of their cultural heritage. The writers and practitioners noted in this study unmask a grandmother or a female elder as essential figure in their spiritual development and cultural identity. Through their teachings, our *abuelas* —alive or deceased—serve as bridges to ancestral lands.

[1]A *botánica* or spiritual center sells herbs, potions, candles, religious images, amulets and the advice of a folk healer who recommends or prepares remedies for a myriad of personal problems.

[2]*Curanderismo*— stems from the Spanish *curar*, to cure. As Margarite Fernández Olmos explains at length, "Although usually associated with Mexicans and Mexican-American culture, *curanderismo* is in fact a complex cultural healing system with roots common to healing modalities found in the Caribbean and throughout Latin America. It combines—in varying degrees—Hippocratic humoral (hot-cold) theories of disease with Amerindian herbal medicine and diverse spiritual traditions, ranging from African-based systems to the nineteenth-century spiritualist/spiritist philosophy of Allan Kardec, which inspired the creation of spiritual healing centers throughout Mexico and the Caribbean. It is the 'integrative' medical resource of the people, sanctioned by the community" (2001: 10-11).

[3]The heavy hitters within the "Boom" generation of writers are Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Mario Vargas Llosa (Perú), Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia) and, now deceased, Julio Cortázar (Argentina). Few would argue, however, that it was the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, a generation older than the boom writers, who presented the concept of "magical realism" in his introduction to his 1949 novel *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*, trans. 1957) as a way of explaining the inexplicable aspects of Haitian culture in the book. The voodoo ceremonies he came in contact with during his visit to the island

in 1943 were not totally foreign to him given the different but also African-rooted practice of *Santería* in Cuba. Apropos our topic, in Carpentier's novel Mackandal, a slave disabled by an accident, is assigned to shepherding and in the fields he takes to exploring flora and fungi. With the help of Mamán Loi, "an old woman who lived alone, but received visitors from far away," Mackandal becomes an expert on plant poison (Carpentier , 1971: 39, my translation). Once he has acquired this knowledge Mackandal runs away and from hiding he secretly recruits other slaves to poison a great number of animals and white families on the island. The key to Mackandal's call to resistance and rebellion lie with mother nature and Mamán Loi. For an introduction to the Latin American "boom" in the literary context, see Williams (2003: 125-135; 1998: 55-62).

[4]Unlike acculturation, in which an individual appropriates aspects of both a dominant (Anglo) and minority (Latino) culture and functions comfortably within both without rejecting either, assimilation usually denotes, given the topic at hand, severance from Latino heritage and the loss of that aspect of the individual's cultural identity.

[5]Originating in Cuba, *Santería* developed from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries "out of the encounter of the religious beliefs and practices of African slaves, the Roman Catholic Church, and French spiritism as interpreted by Allan Kardec" (Lefever, 1996: 319). Prohibited by their masters from native religious practices, slaves figured out that Roman Catholic saints acting as intermediaries between humans and God paralleled the Yoruba orishas to whom they appealed as intercessors with the high god, Olodumare (Lefever, 1996: 320). Hence "under the constraints of their oppression, the slaves began to fuse the intermediaries of the two religions and to identify as specific orisha with a corresponding specific saint. Out of this syncretism there developed a highly complex form of religion known as Santería, or the way of the saints" (Lefever, 1996: 319). Although *Santería* remains important in Cuba today, its adherents are found in many other countries, including the United States where large numbers of Cubans settled following the Revolution of 1959 and communist takeover of the island.

[6]While for peoples of Caribbean origin a *santero/santera* is a person who practices *Santería*, among Mexican-Americans the same term denotes a craftsperson dedicated to carving religious effigies of saints from wood.

[7]As politically-engaged Mexican-Americans began to identify with the struggles of the Black Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, activists appropriated the term *Chicano* to connect them with their indigenous ancestry. "Mexican"—*mexicano* in Spanish—originally referred to people who spoke Nahualt. The Aztecs, the largest of this group, were often called Mexicanos, which phonetically was pronounced *mechicano* in Nahualt (Fisher, 1980: 307; 1973: 18).

[8]The tradition of women healers represented by Doña Felicia in the novel and the incorporation of Christian beliefs in their practices parallel those of Native American grandmothers (see Ritts Benally, 1999).

[9]Among other Latino writers, the *curandera* is the central character in "Doña Mariciana García" by Rocky Gámez (1983); "The Herb Woman" by Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert (1993); "They Are Laying Plans for Me—Those Curanderas" by Teresa Palomo Acosta (1993); "Doña Toña of Nineteenth Street" by Louie The Foot González (1993); "Abuela" by Rosa Elena Yzquierdo (1993). See also: *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas* by Aurora Levins Morales (1998). In *Medicine Women, Curanderas, and Women Doctors,* Bobette Perrone, H. Henrieta Stockel, and Victoria Krueger (1989) record their observations of three *curanderas.*

[10]Keeping in mind that all transcription is selective, I've opted to quote at length and in their own voices those who witness, share and/or practice the spiritualities they have inherited.

References

Allende, Isabel. 1993. *The House of the Spirits.* New York: Knopf.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Boderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute.

Broyles-González, Yolanda. 2002. "Indianizing Catholicism: Chicana/India/Mexicana Indigenous Spiritual Practices in Our Image." *Chicana Traditions: Continuity and Change.* Norma E. Cantú and Olga Nájera-Ramírez, eds. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 117-132.

Cabeza de Baca Gilbert, Fabiola. 1993. "The Herb Woman." *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literatura.* Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero, eds. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 52-56.

Carpentier, Alejo. 1971. *El reino de este mundo.* Mexico: Compañía General de Ediciones.

Castillo, Ana. 1994a. *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Castillo, Ana. 1994b. *So Far from God.* New York: Plume.

Cisneros, Sandra. 1992. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories.* New York: Vintage.

Fernández Barrios, Flor. 1999. *Blessed by Thunder: Memoir of a Cuban Childhood.* Seattle: Seal Press.

Fernández Olmos, Margarite. 2001. "La Botánica Cultural: Ars Medica, Ars Poetica." *Healing Cultures: Art and Religion as Curative Practices in the Caribbean and Its Diaspora.* Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gerbert, eds. New York: Palgrave. 1-15.

Fisher, Dexter. 1980. Ed. *The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States.* Boston: Houghton.

Forbes, Jack D. 1973. *Aztecs del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlan.* Greenwich: Fawcett.

Gámez, Rocky. 1983. "Doña Marciana García." *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas.* Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga and Mariana Romo-Carmona, eds. New

York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press. 7-15.
González, Louis The Foot. 1993. "Doña Toña of Nineteenth Street." *Growing Up Chicana/o: An Anthology.* Tiffany Ana López, ed. New York: Morrow. 59-66.
Guzmán Bouvard, Marguerite. 1998. "Introduction." *Grandmothers: Granddaughters Remember.* Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard, ed. New York: Syracuse University Press.
Kafka, Phillipa. 2000. *(Out)Classes Women: Contemporary Chicana Writers on Inequitable Gendered Power Relations.* Westport: Greenwood Press.
Lefever, Harry G. 1996 "When the Saints Go Riding in: Santería in Cuba and the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35: 318-330.
Levins Morales, Aurora. 1998. *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas.* Boston: Beacon.
Medina, Lara. 1998. "Los espíritus siguen hablando: Chicanas Spiritualities." *Living Chicana Theory.* Ed. Carla Trujillo, ed. Berkeley: Third Woman Press. 189-213.
Montero, Mayra. 2001. "The Great Bonanza of the Antilles." *Healing Cultures: Art and Religion as Curative Practices in the Caribbean and Its Diaspora.* Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gerbert, eds. New York: Palgrave. 195-201.
Palomo Acosta, Teresa. 1993. "They Are Laying Plans for Me—Those Curanderas." *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literatura.* Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero, eds. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 296-297.
Perrone, Bobette, H.Henrietta Stockel and Victoria Krueger. 1989. *Medicine Women, Curanderas, and Women Doctors.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
Prida, Dolores. 1991. "Botánica." *Beautiful Señoritas and Other Plays.* Judith Weiss, ed. Houston: Arte Público. 141-180.
Rebolledo, Tey Diana. 1995. *Women Singing in the Snow: A Cultural analysis of Chicana Literature.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
Ritts Benally, Karen. 1999. "Thinking Good: The Teachings of Navajo Grandmother." *American Indian Grandmothers.* Marjorie M. Schweitzer, ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 25-52.
Wexler, Anne. 2001. "Dolls and Healing in a Santería House." *Healing Cultures: Art and Religion as Curative Practices in the Caribbean and Its Diaspora.* Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gerbert, eds. New York: Palgrave. 89-113.
Williams, Raymond Leslie. 2003. *The Twentieth Century Spanish American Novel.* Austin: University of Texas Press.
Williams, Raymond Leslie. 1998. *The Modern Latin American Novel.* New York: Twain.
Yzquierdo, Rosa Elena. 1993. "Abuela." *Growing Up Chicana/o: An Anthology.* Tiffany Ana López, ed. New York: Morrow. 91-92.

Brenda F. McGadney-Douglass, Richard L. Douglass, Nana Araba Apt and Phyllis Antwi

Ghanaian Mothers Helping Adult Daughters
The Survival of Malnourished Grandchildren

Childhood malnutrition in its various forms continues to be a major factor in high rates of infant and child mortality and challenged child development in emerging nations such as Ghana. Although considerable investments have been made by governments and private agencies to address this problem, many programs have failed. Efforts that promote nutrition education, or dietary intervention, such as food supplements and vitamins have often failed. A major barrier to the success of these formal approaches to reduce malnutrition is the reliance on imported western solutions and non-indigenous personnel. Thus, it is the belief of the authors that informal, indigenous support provided by Ghanaian mothers (grandmothers) to daughters of malnourished children, leads to the survival of malnourished children, independent of the formal health care services that may be available in the community. The long-term well-being and children's compliance in nutritional rehabilitation programs is directly related to primary caregiving provided by the grandmothers and other senior women within the family structure.

Childhood malnutrition in its various forms continues to be a major factor in high rates of infant and child mortality and challenged child development in emerging nations such as Ghana. This is generally, but not exclusively, true among the poor. For decades, although considerable investments have been made by governments and private agencies to address this problem, many programs have failed. Efforts that promote nutrition education, or dietary intervention, such as food supplements and vitamins have often failed. A major barrier to the success of these formal approaches to reduce malnutrition is the reliance on imported western solutions and non-indigenous personnel. Thus, it is the belief of the authors that informal, indigenous support, provided by Ghanaian mothers (grandmothers) to daughters of malnourished

children, leads to the survival of malnourished children, independent of the formal health care services that may, or may not, be available in the community. The authors believe that long-term well-being and children's compliance in nutritional rehabilitation programs is directly related to primary caregiving provided by the grandmothers and other senior women within the family structure. Furthermore, without such extended familial support, the challenges faced by, for instance, a single mother with malnourished children, are nearly insurmountable.

The purpose of this paper is to present findings from field studies conducted (1999 and 2001-02) by the authors on the role of Ghanaian grandmothers in the survival of adolescent/young adults inflicted with childhood *kwashiorkor*. Also, included in the paper will be a discussion of implications of study findings for reforms and new initiatives for public policy, clinical practice, and research.

Background

In July and August 1999, our research team collected pilot data from several families on the 15-17 year survival experiences of young adults with histories of *Kwashiorkor* as toddlers in Accra, Ghana (McGadney-Douglass *et al.*,1999, 2000, 2001). The authors examined the role and psycho-social characteristics of these families. The hypothesis for the original study (McGadney-Douglass *et al.*, 1999) was that children who received sustained support from families, namely mothers, while participating in the nutritional rehabilitation program would probably not have a long-term negative impact (psycho-social development) or consequence of early trauma related to experiences with *kwashiorkor*.

Preliminary findings suggested that one explanation for the success of the *kwashiorkor* survivors investigated might stem from the presence and active supportive intervention of the grandmothers living in the household. Moreover, family structures and the availability of a multigenerational support system may be critical to the welfare of babies and toddlers (Oppong, 1999). Specifically, the roles of grandmothers appears to be essential to support daughters caring for malnourished children while adhering to a rigorous weekly twenty-four month *kwashiorkor* rehab program (Agarwal *et al.*, 1997, Oppong, 1999; Stanton, 2001).

Rationale for study

The relationship between informal social supports provided by Ghanaian grandmothers to the survival of their daughter's children inflicted with childhood *Kwashiorkor* has not been studied. Although several small studies in the region (Chad and Nigeria) have documented positive impacts on children's nutritional status if help and support from kin and others of various kinds (assistance with cooking, water fetching, etc.) are given to their mothers, none focus on the role played by grandmothers (Oppong, 1999). As contributors to

the growing economy of Ghana, the viability of potentially large numbers of adults with childhood histories of *kwashiorkor* is a question of both clinical, social, and policy significance. Each year over 15,000 cases of *Kwashiorkor* are identified in the hospitals of Accra (Ayettey, 2001). According to Oppong,

> by now the long term consequences of such early, prolonged suffering are clear ... with potentially devastating impacts for the large numbers of individuals involved and the economies of their nation states. (1999: 36)

Literature review

Kwashiorkor[1] is one of the severest forms of childhood malnutrition caused by a lack of protein and caloric content in the diet.[2] The name is from the language of the Ga people in coastal Ghana (Stanton, 2001). It was first coined and described in Ghana by British physician Cicely Williams in 1928 (Ashitey, 1994; Stanton, 2001). Jennifer Stanton (2001) noted that Dr. Williams often listened to the Ga people, mainly mothers and grandmothers of the infants that she treated, gaining great insight into their illness.

This nutritional disorder normally afflicts toddlers and frequently leads to death of young children. Chief signs include oedema (watery swelling) leading to distended or swollen bellies, sometimes accompanied by reddish coloration or orange-tinted of the hair/skin, a darkening and peeling of the skin at points of flexion and pressure, and changes in the liver.

Today, *kwashiorkor* is endemic in Ghana (see Table 1). The prevalence of severe malnutrition among children in both urban and rural Ghana is primarily due to poverty and inadequate nutritional knowledge of the local population (Stanton, 2001). Unlike most of worldwide *kwashiorkor* incidence that is associated with war, crop failures, civil disturbances or natural disasters, in Ghana *kwashiorkor* is endemic and persistent even in normal and economically stable families.

Children from the poorest households are the most likely to be malnourished and, in particular, to be under weight. The worst affected groups include infants and pre-school children (GHDR, 2001). Lily Yaa Appoh (Appoh & Krekling, 1999) reported in her micro-study from the Volta Region of Ghana that women's beliefs about the causes of *kwashiorkor* are significantly related to the nutritional status of their children. Findings from the children categorized as well nourished (n=49) compared to those suffering from *kwashiorkor* (n=46) indicated that mothers who lacked knowledge about the causes of *kwashiorkor*, were significantly more likely to have a child with the condition.

Reportedly, the persistent malnutrition among children has a negative impact on Ghana's human resource base. Ghana's Minister of Health, Richard Anane, stated that the country might lose $300 million within the next decade if the rate of malnutrition in children and expectant mothers continues to rise.

Table 1: Major Causes of Under-Five Year Old Mortality (1979-1983) in Ghana

Cause	Percentage of Deaths
Measles	12.6
Pneumonia	9.1
Low Birth Weight	8.2
Anemia	7.2
Diarrhea (all forms)	6.8
Kwashiorkor Malnutrition	3.4
Marasmus Malnutrition	2.7
Tuberculosis	0.6
All other causes	42.7

Note: Recorded total number of deaths during period: 25,502
Source: National Nutrition Survey. Center for Health Statistics, Ghana Ministry of Health, 1986.

Although there are a lot of children suffering from malnutrition in Ghana, the authors of this paper believe that much can be learned from family caregivers of survivors of *kwashiorkor* that can be used to develop public policies and programs to strengthen effective treatment of malnourished children supporting both informal and formal approaches to well-being. Formal supports include the early identification and diagnosis of *kwashiorkor* children by physicians and nurses and subsequent compliance in a nutritional rehabilitation/treatment outpatient day program (24-36 months) at a local polyclinic. The authors believe that informal family supports also ensure the intergenerational survival of most children with *kwashiorkor* and productive participation in development of their countries, especially in Ghana.

Informal family support may significantly contribute to child survival, particularly those who are ill. Findings from the largest empirical study (n=1,057) conducted on Ghanaian elders (Apt, 1996) suggested that grandmothers significantly contributed to the family's functioning. In this study, Ghanaian grandmothers provided informal support (instrumental/emotional) by acting as surrogate mothers, providing childcare, caring for long-term sick/disabled children, providing financial assistance, food preparation, house cleaning, sewing/mending, washing/ironing, gardening, tending animals, shopping, other domestic tasks, counselling/advice, settling family disputes, fulfilling family ceremonial roles, and acting as a family trustee.

In response to her evaluation of intergenerational relationship between elders and young children, Nana Araba Apt (1996) wrote:

> ...old and young support each other's activities with certain delineation's, the interplay of economic and social activities defining this form.... Among many ethnic groups of Ghana, the factor of age is of considerable importance in structuring the priority of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, the aged formed quite an integral part of the family unit, holding definite and high ranking positions.... The health care role of the woman is a long-standing tradition; elderly women were accorded the status of experts in social and medical problems, folklore, and tradition ... ageing women's social roles remain unchanged. Grandmothers are actively involved in the caring and nurturing of their grandchildren. In performing this role, grandmothers provide food, pay school fees and provide health care. (1996: 30-31).

Methodology

Research Team

Principal investigators included, a social worker and social epidemiologist from the United States. Ghanaian research team members consisted of a public health physician, gerontological social scientist, and a nutrition consultant who were all faculty at the University of Ghana, Legon.[3] Other Ghanaian support staff included two community-based public health nurses, and a field research assistant.[4] The Ghanaian team acted as translators for those individuals who chose to speak in their native language, Ga, or other vernaculars.

Sample selection and recruitment

The convenience sample from this study consisted of index cases and immediate family members who were in the home at the time of diagnosis and treatment of the index cases. Index cases were selected on the basis that they were adolescents or young adults, had received a minimum of two years of treatment for *kwashiorkor* malnutrition in a nutritional rehabilitation program, and had a grandmother or family member present who could report the role of the grandmother in their survival. All subjects interviewed were video and audio taped and paid the equivalent of $20.00 in Ghanaian currency.

Community health nurses who had been living and providing services in this community for more than 18 years were employed to assist with the identification, recruitment, data translation, and interviewing of research participants in the Accra metropolitan area.

Sample demographics and characteristics

Group family interviews were held from November 2001 to April 2002 with 17 index cases (one set of twins) and 16 families units, totalling 62 persons. Due to young ages of two index cases, six and eleven, two families (six in all), although interviewed and compensated, were dropped from the

study. The final sample consisted of 15 index cases (one set of twins) and 14 family units, totalling 48 persons. Index cases were almost evenly divided between males and females, seven and eight respectively. Males reportedly ranged in age from 12–17 (average age 15.70) and females were reported to be from age 14–23 (average age 17.66). Average size of family group members interviewed (excluding index case): 3.05; range three to four. In contrast to gender of the index cases, family members interviewed were almost always female, 27 to 4. Eleven mothers who participated ranged in age from 32–51 with a mean of 39.64 years. Six Aunts ranged in age from 42 to 54 (average age 47.8). Three of the Aunts became surrogate mothers to four index cases due to the premature death of their mothers (and in two cases both parents). Fathers were present at two interviews,[5] aged 45 and 50. There were a total of ten grandmothers (mean age 56.81) and one great-grandmother who was 100 years old. Siblings who were interviewed included two half-brothers, ages 25 and 27, and a sister age 28.

All of the interviews took place in the densely populated and very impoverished fishing communities of Jamestown and Chorkor which are in urban Accra.

Structure of instrument

Qualitative questions were designed around the following variables/themes:

- Kwashiorkor/malnutrition history (medical care and rehabilitation);
- Informal caregiving (grandmothers and surrogate grandmothers and other relatives);
- Formal caregiving and intervention (nutrition rehabilitation program participation).

Findings

Kwashiorkor/malnutrition history

Children in the study treated for *kwashiorkor*, presented symptoms as young as six months and as old as three years of age with a primary symptom of excessive diarrhea described as "toilet watery". The age of origin of the condition is consistent with the literature (Appoh & Krekling, 1999; Stanton, 2001).

The majority of mothers and surrogate mothers believed that the child became sick due to the lack of breast milk and/or giving cocoa as a food supplement. This finding is consistent with the study that Appoh (Appoh & Krekling, 1999) conducted on the knowledge that women in the Volta Region of Ghana had about the causes of *kwashiorkor*. Of the 95 women interviewed (46 had well nourished children and 46 had children suffering from *kwashiorkor*), 67 believed that it was caused by a lack of (the right type of) food.

Family members, especially grandmothers, indicated that they believed the health care given to their children at the nutritional rehabilitation polyclinic was successful. After the intervention, their children began to crawl/walk, eat normally, and participate in the family.

Informal caregiving: grandmothers and surrogate relatives

Grandmothers, surrogate mothers, and family members presented the grandmothers as being very strong, self-reliant and sufficient. This was evidenced in the following testimonials of instrumental and financial support given to their daughters and grandchildren (malnourished and healthy).

> *My mother (grandmother) went to the hospital, cooked fresh food and light soup and gave him medicine ... she sold drinks (palm wine) to earn funds ... without the help of my mother my son would have died.*

> *Grandmother sold small items and gave to daughter to take baby to clinic; now stays home to help with kids and pay school fees ....*

> *My daughter was so young at the time that I would go with her to the clinic or take the baby myself .... I also sold Kenke for income.*

Reportedly, another grandmother worked as a nursery school teacher to support the family while her daughter stayed home with the index case.

Formal caregiving and intervention: nutrition rehabilitation program

Most of the grandmothers of the kwashi-ill toddlers advised their daughters to seek help. This is consistent with findings on the role of Ghanaian elders from a study conducted by Social Gerontologist Nana Araba Apt (1996). She reported that elderly Ghanaian women were accorded the status of experts in social and medical problems. In our study, a mother of triplets said it wasn't until two died a couple of months apart that she sought formal treatment for the last child at the insistence of her mother.

> *My mother advised me to take her to the hospital ... a week later I took her ... didn't know what was wrong .... afraid that she was getting worse and I did not want her to die.*

Another grandmother was adamant in telling us that she was skilled in observing that her grandchild was sick and did not hesitate to tell her daughter to seek medical treatment because she knew how healthy babies behave and looked and knew that this one was ill. She was the mother of twelve children; this included 4 multiple births of twins. She also happily informed us that both her oldest and youngest children had delivered twins too!

My mother told me to take my son to the clinic ... took him to the clinic and I was told to bring him back at another time by the doctor ... when symptoms worsened and became more pronounced I returned to the polyclinic and then was referred by the physician to the malnutrition program.

The majority of *kwashiorkor* survivors in the study were evaluated and treated at a community-based outpatient Nutritional Rehabilitation Program in the polyclinic. All received a "kwashi diet" (see Figure 1) consisting of vitamins, distribution of milk powder, a soybean-whole-wheat blend or fish powder, an oil-sulgum-wheat-soy blend. All were given instruction in food preparation (cooking of porridge, Kwashi diet) and sterilization of cooking utensils and baby bottles, respite in nursery, and education and counselling at a pre-natal program

One family, however, admitted seeking indigenous treatment (herbalist/spiritualist) prior to securing traditional medical care. This is what they said:

[We] ... thought his illness was "witchcraft" ... maybe someone in the family was hurting the boy.... First we took him to a spiritualist and they prayed for him and did some rituals because he did not get better we took him to the clinic.... Later [we] found out it was a sickness.

Appoh found in her study of Ghanaian mothers of well-nourished (n=49) and *kwashiorkor* (n=46) children in the Volta Region that 67 believed correctly that *kwashiorkor* was caused by a lack of food in contrast to 27 women who responded incorrectly, 17 of whom believed that *kwashiorkor* was caused by evil spirits/witches or *gbogbovo/adzetowo* (1999: 54). There was a statistically significant strong relationship with beliefs that the mothers held about the causes of *kwashiorkor* and the nutritional status of their children. In other words, mothers with correct beliefs about the causes of *kwashiorkor* had children with better nutritional status than mothers with incorrect beliefs. Many of the children suffering from *kwashiorkor* in Appoh's study wore amulets around their bodies that they thought would ward off the evil spirits causing the condition.

For more than ten years the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Ghana has embarked on nutritional education for mothers in health centres or polyclinics (Appoh, 1999). Here nutritionists teach, enlighten, advise or acquaint family members with effective methods to ensure survival of *kwashiorkor* victims through adequate food preparation and feeding from two to three years daily. Caregivers, mostly grandmothers, were taught how to sterilize utensils, give vitamins, and prepare clean water and a nutritious porridge that they feed to the child onsite (breakfast and lunch) and take a large portion home for an evening meal. Sites are equipped with baby beds, toys, cooking ovens, etc., for the day-long stay. The impact of formal treatment on the survival of these children was documented by Victor Lavy, John Strauss, Thomas Duncan and Philippe De

Figure 1: Kwashi Diet
Composition of a PEM Rehabilitation Diet[1]

Meal	Content
Breakfast Options	
Corn pap[2] with akara or moi-moi[3]	Corn, sugar, black-eyed beans, pepper, onion, crayfish, palm-oil, salt.
Boiled yam or bread with fish stew	Bread, yam, fish, pepper, fresh tomatoes/ tomato paste, onion, palm-oil, salt.
Lunch Options	
Amala, Eba or Eko (Agidi) with vegetable soup	Dough from yam flour, fermented and fried cassava meal or fermented corn flour, meat or fish, crayfish, egusi (melon seed), fresh tomatoes/tomato paste, pepper, onion, leafy vegetables, palm oil, salt.
Dinner Options	
Bean or yam pottage	Yam or black-eyed beans, crayfish, pepper, onion, fresh tomatoes/tomato paste, palm oil, salt.
Rice with stew	Rice, meat or fish, pepper, onion, fresh tomatoes/tomato puree, palm oil, salt.

[1]Adapted from Smith, I. F., O. Taiwo & M. H. N. Golden, "Plant Protein Rehabilitation Diets and Iron Supplementation of the PEM Child," *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 43 (1989): 350-355 and Smith, I.F. & E. O. Ojofeitimi, *Nutrition and Diet Therapy for Health Care Professionals in Africa*, Ibadan, Nigeria: Y-Books Publisher, 1995.
[2]Corn gruel commonly called pap is made from fermented corn (maize) from which most of the hull has been removed during processing.
[3]Akara is seasoned and fried bean balls; moi-moi is steamed bean pudding.

Vreyer (1995). They discovered during their study of the impact of the quality of health care on children's nutrition and survival in Ghana that child services (measured by the weekly hours of availability of child health care) has a significant and positive impact on the survival of children both in samples in rural and urban Ghana. If child services were extended by an additional hour a week (approximately a 15 percent increase), the median survival duration of children would increase by one percent in urban areas; and if rural child services equalled the urban mean (11.5 hours a week), the mean survival time of rural would increase by 9.3 percent.

Limitations

Any exploratory field research faces limitations in replicability and generalizability. If this is extended to conducting such field research in the neighborhoods of urban Accra, Ghana, such limitations have the potential of being severe. In order to address these concerns the research was thoroughly documented in several concurrent ways including video and audio tape and the use of independent observers who took copious notes. Translators ensured that the respondents understood the questions that were posed and also that the team members understood the responses. Still this study had limitations that are important to appreciate in areas of sample selection, response validity and generalizability.

The selection of families was dependent upon the memories of public health nurses assigned to the Princess Marie Louise Children's Hospital in Accra because for cases such as those we sought to study there are no long-term medical records. The reasons that records fail to survive for long periods of time in Ghana include many factors such as the physical deterioration of paper due to high humidity and storage capacity. The Princess Marie Louise Children's Hospital is the site of the first entry of the Ga phrase *kwashiorkor* into the medical lexicon. The sample reflected families that had been in the care of the nursing staff of this one hospital and had experienced a child with kwashiorkor as long as 18 years prior to the interviews. Issues of memory, sample bias, and sample mortality are all substantial.

In addition, all of the families were Ga, which indicates limited generalizability to other ethnic groups in Ghana or elsewhere. Within the traditional Ga culture there is little attention to the documentation of birth dates or the calendar date of sentinel events in peoples' lives. Therefore the precision of dates, ages, and the progression of events for this sample could be challenged in absolute terms. Relative validity is expected to be accurate to the extent that the events of childrearing, clinical experiences, births and deaths were described in association with other key events, including political and historical events that served as markers in time. Poor literacy, multiple vernacular languages, the potential desire to please the research team, and an ongoing challenge to preserve privacy in the often-crowded conditions in which interviews were conducted all could test the replicability of our findings.

To address these issues the process was systematic and each family interview was conducted in strict accord with the written protocol.

These limitations indicate that generalizability to populations that are substantially different or to circumstances in which malnutrition is not an endemic condition, such as situations involving war, civil dislocations, or acute crisis, are unwarranted. Such limitations also suggest that replication of this effort in Ghana as well as in different cultures where malnutrition is endemic would be highly desirable. Others have commented on the endemic nature of *kwashiorkor* in Ghana and the health and social circumstances that sustain this dubious distinction in that country (Sommerfelt & Stewart, 1994; Oppong, 1999).

Discussion and implications

Although *kwashiorkor,* as a major category of childhood malnutrition has been in the literature for over 70 years, a decided lack of literature on the long-term survival of *kwashiorkor* victims provides little guidance to those who would create and manage rehabilitation efforts or to respond to the needs of children and their families who do, in fact, survive. This study observed well-developed young adults, as respondents, who had survived *kwashiorkor* because of the involvement of a multi-generational family system. They were contributing to their families and to the larger society. The pediatric malnutrition literature, however, has little-to-no mention of the roles of older women, or the extended family, in child survival from *kwashiorkor.*

Common problems of poverty, lack of education and economic opportunity, the failure of most men and fathers to be active in child rearing or economic support of the families, and a medical care system that relies on the parents of profoundly sick children to manage compliance with a long and difficult malnutrition rehabilitation program all mitigate against successful treatment and survival. These factors increase the importance of the older women in all aspects of family viability. The significant and persistent involvement of grandmothers and senior women in the survival of these families is a major determinant of the survival of these children from *kwashiorkor.* Early detection and insistence on medical intervention, economic and child care support, housing, social integration, emotional support, and more all facilitated child survival of the grandchildren; women with sick children who do not enjoy the support of such strong women would seem to be at a decided disadvantage regarding completion of the rehabilitation of the child.

Recognition of the importance of the older women suggests that the Ministry of Health and the medical care systems would benefit from substantial economic and social support of the older women as a means of improving the success of the malnutrition programs, in general, and the *kwashiorkor* rehabilitation efforts, specifically. Because few developing nations have significant social security systems, the endurance of older women is largely a consequence of their own efforts and ingenuity. Their larger role in society and in the survival

of children should be recognized and supported by the national governments on behalf of the grandchildren and great grandchildren who represent the future.

This study also reinforces an important and broadly generalizable reality that applies to many public health and medical situations affecting the poor and to populations in developing nations. Intervention with pediatric care is not just about the mother and the sick child; in such situations the entire family structure becomes involved in the care and keeping of the children, participation in rehabilitation efforts, wage-earning, food preparation, ensuring housing, and all other matters that affect the family. These multi-generational households depend on the elder women in ways that affect all other aspects of the family's survival. It is consistent with these observations that the survival of the youngest children is also dependent upon the actions, wisdom, and experience of the oldest women in the household.

The authors acknowledge the sponsors of the research: College of Health and Human Services, Graduate School and World College, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA and the U.S. Department of State, Fulbright Program, Washington, DC. This paper was presented at the annual meeting of The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM), May 2004, York University: Toronto, Canada.

[1]*Kwashi* means the first child; *orkor* means the second child; "What happens when the second child is born?"
[2]The English name is Protein-Energy Malnutrition (PEM) or Protein Calorie Malnutrition (PCM). Disorder differs significantly from Marasmus, which is severe starvation from which the negative neurological outcomes on survivors are permanent.
[3]Phyllis Antwi, MPH, MD, Bruce Owusu, MPH, Ph.D., and Nana Araba Apt, MSW, Ph.D.
[4]Beatrice Addo, Elizabeth Martey, and Frank Ampougah.
[5]We later found out that in several of the families the fathers were not present because they were working and one father was an invalid.

References

Agarwal, S., Attah, M., Apt, N., Grieco, M., Kwakye, E. A., & Turner, J. 1997. *Bearing the Weight: The Kayayoo—Ghana's Working Girl Child. May.* Monograph. Centre for Social Policy Studies: University of Ghana, Legon.

Appoh, L. A., & Krekling, S. 1999. "Mothers' Beliefs About Causes of Kwashiorkor and the Nutritional Status of Children in the Volta Region of Ghana." *Ife Psychologia* 71: 46-59.

Apt, N. A. 1996. *Coping With Old Age in a Changing Africa: Social Change and the Elderly Ghanaian.* Aldershot, Brookfield, Vermont: Avebury.

Ashitey, G.A. 1994. *Ghana Health: Twelve Selected Published Papers of G.A.* Ashitey. Belfast: Bel-team Publications.

Ayettey, S. (2001. Correspondence to principal investigators, February, March.

Ghana Human Development Report (GHDR). 2001. Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research. University of Ghana-Legon: Ghana.

Lavy, V., Strauss, J., Duncan, T., & DeVreyer, P. 1995. "The Impact of the Quality of Health Care on Children's Nutrition and Survival in Ghana." LSMS (Living Standards Measurement Study) Working Paper No. 106. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

McGadney-Douglass, B. F., Douglass, R. L., Garrison, E. R., Antwi, P., and Owusu, B. 1999, November. "Social and Behavioral Characteristics of Long-Term Survivors of *Kwashiorkor* in Ghana." Paper presented at the African Studies Association. Philadelphia, PA.

McGadney-Douglass, B. F., Douglass, R. L., Antwi, P., Owusu, B., and Garrison, E. R. 2000, March. "Social and Functional Characteristics of Long-Term Survivors of *Kwashiorkor* in Ghana." Annual Meeting, Michigan Academy of Arts, Science, and Letters, Saginaw Valley State University, Saginaw, MI.

McGadney-Douglass, B. F., Douglass, R. L., Apt, N., Antwi, P., Garrison, E. 2001, March. "The Role of Grandmothers in the Survival of Children with Kwashiorkor in Ghana." Michigan Academy of Science, Arts & Letters, Annual Meeting, The University of Michigan, Dearborn, MI.

Oppong, C. 1999. "Infants' Entitlements and Babies' Capabilities: Explaining Infant Hunger." *Institute of African Studies: Research Review* 15 (2): 35-63.

Smith, I. F. & Ojofeitimi, E. O. 1995. *Nutrition and Diet Therapy for Health Care Professionals in Africa.* Ibadan, Nigeria: Y-Books Publisher.

Smith, I. F., Taiwo, O., & Golden, M. H. N. 1989. "Plant Protein Rehabilitation Diets and Iron Supplementation of the PEM Child." *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 43: 350-355.

Sommerfelt, A. E., & Stewart, M. K. 1994. "Children's Nutritional Status." *Demographic and Health Surveys Comparative Studies No. 12.* Calverton, Maryland: Macro International Inc.

Stanton, J. 2001. "Listening to the Ga: Cicely Williams' Discovery of *Kwashiorkor* on the Gold Coast." *Women and Modern Medicine. The Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine.* Clio Medica, Vol. 611. L. Conrad & A. Hardy, eds. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, B.V. 149-171.

Susan Loudermilk Garza and Sharon Talley

Telling Our Grandmothers' Stories

Teaching and Celebrating the History of the Women in Our Lives

"Telling Our Grandmothers' Stories" (TOGS) is a celebratory, interdisciplinary event held annually since the spring of 2000 at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as part of Women's History Month. The event focuses on capturing and telling the history of the women in our lives so that their voices can be added to the history of tradition that has already been told. Because these women's stories rarely fit the linear tradition of history and storytelling, they typically have not been formally preserved, and even when they have been recorded, they have not been valued in a way that adequately represents their richness and significance. This event and the learning opportunities that support it help to correct this situation by recovering, preserving, and celebrating these stories. This essay describes the goals of the program, explains its pedagogical foundations, and offers suggestions for incorporating TOGS into your own educational or civic setting.

Since 1929, when Virginia Woolf recognized that women's stories were "all but absent from history," much has changed (1987: 43). On the library shelves that Woolf once perused in vain, we now find more stories of real women, women such as Amelia Earhart, Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Mead, Sally Ride, and even Woolf herself. Women have gradually become more than a footnote in history books; however, the women's lives that are recorded are still largely determined and measured by conventional (i.e., male) standards. The accomplishments and contributions of women who have shaped our world in more subtle and qualitative ways are still largely absent from history, and the stories of the lives of women from diverse cultures, such as the Hispanic culture in which we live and teach in South Texas, are still very much unrecorded. In recognition of the need to gather and preserve these stories, we developed an interdisciplinary program called "Telling Our Grandmothers' Stories" (TOGS).

TOGS is a celebratory, interdisciplinary event held annually since the spring of 2000 at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) as part of Women's History Month. The event focuses on capturing and telling the history of the women in our lives so that their voices can be added to the history of tradition that has already been told. We interpret "grandmother" in the larger sense of the word to include those women who came before us and created the stories that form who we are. This broader concept of grandmother goes beyond biological connections. Many women shape our lives in meaningful ways, and even if we did not have a personal relationship with a grandmother, the stories of the women who have helped to shape who we are remain important.

Because these women's stories rarely fit the linear tradition of history and storytelling, they typically have not been formally preserved, and even when they have been recorded, they have not been valued in a way that adequately represents their richness and significance. This event and the learning opportunities that support it help to correct this situation by recovering, preserving, and celebrating these stories. We seek to expand our understanding of history and the role of women in creating that history by broadening our literary and historical canons to include these important voices.

This project focuses on history, specifically addressing the richness of our diverse heritage and traditions. In South Texas where we teach, the region is rich with the history of women of many backgrounds, many colors. From women who have made contributions as the head of a household or as the force behind why their children went on to be successful, to such women as Irma Rangel, first Hispanic woman elected to the Texas legislature. These untapped resources should be celebrated, and spaces should be allowed for telling these stories in ways that re-create their richness and realities. Especially important are the stories of those in the margin, those stories not included in the traditional recordings of history. Issues of language and cultural understanding affect the telling of the stories.[1] Because our grandmothers' stories are in those margins, there is a need to capture and share them so that history can be viewed through the contexts of these women's lives.

Goals of the program

The goals of the program are as follows:

- To celebrate the lives and times of grandmothers through memorabilia such as artifacts, letters, journals, poetry, prose, poster presentations, and oral stories.
- To paint pictures of folklore, heritage, and traditions.
- To remember the impact that these women have or have had on their families and communities.
- To allow voices to resurface in these tributes to remind us of their contributions and the important roles that they play in our lives.

- To develop multiple/nontraditional formats in order to truly represent the richness of each story.
- To create historical documents that add the history of these women to the history that has already been told.
- To expand the definition of literacy in order to create learning spaces that encompass the histories and traditions of our students.

Pedagogical foundations: expanded notions of literacy

Through our experiences over the past five years, we have come to recognize the unique teaching and learning opportunities that TOGS provides. A large percentage of the students in our area are from under-represented groups—Hispanic, African-American, International, ESL, low-income. TOGS opens up the meanings of literacy for these students. The stories that we choose to celebrate are defined by/created by the local lives, the local experiences of many women whose stories have not found a place in the conventional annals of history. When students can share their stories of these women, and those stories are in turn valued, these students begin to see that the traditional classroom setting can have meaning in their individual lives and their local histories.

In his text *Literacy Matters: Writing and Reading the Social Self,* Robert Yagelski (2000) tells us that literacy is defined by the local rather than the universal. With a growing emphasis on constructivist principles in education, focusing on the belief that learning begins at the point of each individual's literate stance, TOGS becomes one such means by which teachers can shift the focus in their classrooms from teacher-centered to student-centered. Carol Strumbo (1992), in writing about her experiences with oral histories of a black community, states, "the language of school, in too many cases, is not the language of the students who enter my classroom. Removed, academic words often separate young people from what they know, and in a real sense, inhibits their learning" (112). TOGS is a valuable resource in the classroom not only because it celebrates diversity, but also because it expands our notions as teachers and our students' notions of history and literacy.

Pedagogical foundations: affirming cultural diversity through storytelling

Because of its focus on local, personal narratives, TOGS is an effective means to explore the meaning of multiculturalism as "a lived-experience" (Fu & Stremmel, 1999). As Victoria R. Fu and Andrew J. Stremmel explain, when meanings are socially constructed through the sharing of lived stories, the contexts exist "for constructing knowledge of self and others" in ways that "promote understanding," "break down stereotypes and myths about the unknown," and "create caring connections among us" (1999: vii, vii-viii). Through this process, students move beyond a recognition of the surface

elements of culture (i.e., language, symbols, and artifacts) that the stories incorporate to an understanding and appreciation of the customs, practices, and interactional patterns that define the second layer of culture. And through the pluralistic framework that TOGS creates, with continued interaction and discussion with other students also sharing their own stories, they finally reach an understanding of some of the underlying social values, beliefs, norms, and expectations that shape and define cultures at their deepest level (Valle, 1997).

Using TOGS in the classroom to meet educational standards for learning

TOGS can be applied to current pedagogies of learning and literacy, including such concepts as writing as a process, writing to learn, learning to write, writing across the curriculum, second language acquisition, service learning, active learning concepts, integrated learning activities, and the use of a variety of print and non-print texts from different time periods and in many genres. Many of the teachers we have worked with have developed grade-appropriate strategies and model lesson plans to incorporate the program into their curricula in ways that are consistent with local, state, and national education standards that emphasize literacy, reading, writing, and speaking. TOGS meets many important educational standards, such as providing a variety of literary and historical genres, both written and oral; making students aware of the importance of family beliefs, customs, language, and traditions; and expanding students' knowledge of cultural diversity.

The experience of Piedad Ymbert and her kindergarten class at the Early Childhood Development Center on our campus is one example of the many interdisciplinary applications of TOGS in the classroom. In this class, the students play a vocabulary building game, "In My Grandmother's Attic" to introduce the word *an* when using words that begin with vowels. The teacher and students sit in a circle, and the teacher begins the game by saying, "Last night I looked in a trunk in my grandmother's attic and found *an* orange." The student to her immediate right or left then says, "Last night I looked in a trunk in my grandmother's attic and found an orange and an apple" The game continues around the circle, with each person repeating what has been said previously and then adding an object that begins with a vowel. At the same time during the semester, the students are also studying the Underground Railroad and learning that the quilt played an important role in the success of this resistance movement by serving as both a map and a signal in leading many slaves to freedom. They then contextualize this knowledge with their own study of quilts and the significance of these quilts to those who create them as well as to those who receive them. As a class project, they make their own "quilt." Each student brings something from their grandmother's attic (at least metaphorically) to add to the quilt. The object is then photographed, and the photo is applied to a quilt square. In a formal presentation to commemorate the quilt and its significance, each child explains what he or she has found in "grand-

mother's attic" and the importance of the object to the child's family.

As this example illustrates, the classroom applications of TOGS emphasize reading, writing, and speaking and employ multi-media genres while building bridges among many of the disciplines of the arts (i.e., drawing, painting, photography, ceramics, music, theatrical performance, and dance) and the humanities (i.e., history, languages, literature, composition and rhetoric, creative writing, ethnic studies, folklore, regional studies, social science, and women's studies). While many who hear about the program think the event is about writing down stories in the traditional narrative format, or sitting around listening to people share oral renditions of their memories of their grandmothers, multiple formats for presentation are encouraged. There are many format ideas that storytellers can draw from and adapt to fit their own situations, and this variety creates the interactive, innovative nature of the program. For example, if my grandmother's life is largely represented by the recipes she made, I might choose to tell her life in the format of a cookbook. Or if she traveled extensively, I might decorate an old suitcase with postcards of her travels, and inside the suitcase pack some of the clothes that she actually wore on some of her trips. As students search through memorabilia and artifacts, they begin to reflect upon and then find ways to represent the folklore, heritage, and traditions of the past, and they are reminded of these women's impact on their families and communities. Through this process, the student storytellers have the opportunities to rethink history by enabling these women's voices to resurface in the resulting tributes, joining with the storytellers' voices in reminding us of their contributions and the continuing role they play in our lives.

TOGS is especially helpful in increasing student awareness of and respect for racial and ethnic diversity. In this regard, we have found that literary texts are often effective vehicles for framing classroom discussion about different cultures, while affording much opportunity for interdisciplinary connections and activities to contextualize these texts. Provided below are some of the specific texts and sample prompts that have been used successfully with a range of grade levels:

- In his introduction to *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, N. Scott Momaday (1969) tells of his grandmother, Aho, through three different voices that converge on the page to create a multigenerational view of her life as it relates to Momaday's story. Tell your grandmother's story in relation to your own story and the history surrounding both stories in the same format that Momaday uses.

- *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*, edited by Paula Gunn Allen (1989), relates the story of the power women in Native American cultures gain from their female ancestors. Did your grandmother tell similar stories? How can you retell those stories and weave them into her story

as part of her (and your) traditions?

•In *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros (1988) tells about being named after her great-grandmother. Her stories are framed as little vignettes of the people, places, and events on Mango Street. Tell your grandmother's story framed around a specific location that was significant to her and to your family.

•In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs (1987/1861) describes the inspiration and support she received from her maternal grandmother, who was a baker. After buying her own freedom from slavery by selling the crackers that she baked at night, Jacobs's grandmother nurtured and supported her family through her cooking. Do you have any recipes that have been passed down from your grandmother? How can you share them with others in a way that will re-create her story and communicate their significance for you and your family?

"Publishing" the stories

Because TOGS is a celebration and recovery project, we believe it is important that storytellers have a forum in which to share their stories with others. The ways in which the stories can be organized and staged—or otherwise "published"—are almost as limitless as the formats of the stories themselves. The process of "telling" the stories should be an integral and culminating part of whatever learning experiences are being supported by the program. Exhibits can be intimate or large-scale, of short or long duration, attended only by the participants or open for a larger community to enjoy. For our annual TOGS program at TAMU-CC, we host a one-day event where storytellers gather to share their stories. Many of the storytellers are students in our classrooms, but we also have faculty, staff, and community members participate. The TOGS motto, "All of the stories are important to tell," emphasizes the nature of our program. We do not give awards for first, second, third place, etc. Instead, we attempt to provide a space where storytellers can share their grandmothers' stories in whatever format best represents those experiences.

Some examples of storytellers and stories that have been shared at recent TOGS events at our university include:

•An international graduate student who shared oral stories of his grandmother in India, including how at the age of seventeen she found herself widowed and had to take on tasks usually reserved for males in order to care for her children.

•A student of German heritage who created a visual display that

featured mounted photographs and used both German and English to tell her grandmother's life story.

•A Hispanic student who wrote an essay entitled "*De Colores*" in which she reflected on the process through which family and cultural traditions helped her come to terms with the death of her grandmother Juanita.

•An Anglo student who created a tabletop display of meaningful artifacts from her grandmother's life, including a piece of embroidery that the grandmother was stitching and had not completed at the time of her death. In talking about her grandmother, the student emphasized the importance of this tangible remembrance and how she plans someday to extend this connection with her grandmother by completing the piece with the needle and thread that is still intact.

Every year, we see new formats and ideas in the exhibits, which is one very strong testament to the diversity of the heritage of these women. Students, faculty, staff, and community members who attend TOGS leave the events with a richer understanding of the lives of these women, and many plan to begin to gather their own grandmothers' stories so they can participate in the program the following year.

New directions and future plans for TOGS

Del Mar College, a community college in our area, began hosting its own event on the same day as our program in the spring of 2003. We are currently collaborating with public and private schools in our local area, as well as local youth and community organizations, to help them integrate the program into their curricula. As another way to preserve and disseminate the stories that have been told through TOGS, we are in the process of developing a website, a flexible medium that makes it possible to capture more of the true essence of the exhibits than a printed text allows. In taking these steps to expand the program, we have been encouraged by the response we have received from educators and community leaders who have recognized the program as a way to link the current interest in recovering women's history with innovative teaching strategies applicable for a full-range of age groups, interests, and backgrounds.

By writing about the program, we hope to communicate to others outside our immediate region about TOGS so that more stories can be told, valued and preserved for future generations as well as our own. TOGS can be used as a learning experience for a single classroom in a wide variety of disciplines. It can also be broadened into a collaborate program that involves an entire school, creating the opportunity to involve students in a variety of possibilities for outreach to the community. By adding these stories to our history, we will

broaden our understanding of literacy and learning as we share the wonderful richness of our grandmothers. All of the stories are important to tell. Please tell your stories.

For more information, go to our website at http://www.tamucc.edu/wiki/TOGS/HomePage, or contact Susan Garza (Susan.Garza@mail.tamucc.edu) or Sharon Talley (Sharon.Talley@mail.tamucc.edu).

[1] The mere nature of storytelling confined to the page ("told-to-the-page" as Paula Gunn Allen [1989] describes the history of the telling of Native American stories [6]) does not lend itself to providing the depth of variety of representations that can better illustrate the myriad richness of the experiences of our grandmothers. Much has been written about the bastardization of stories of those in the margin, including the anthropological accounts such as *Papago Woman* (Underhill, 1985/1936) dealing with translation issues.

References

Allen, Paula Gunn. Ed. 1989. *Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women.* Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.

Cisneros, Sandra. 1988. *The House on Mango Street.* 2nd rev. ed. Houston, Tex.: Arte Publico Press.

Fu, Victoria R. and Andrew J. Stremmel, Ed. 1999. *Affirming Diversity Through Democratic Conversations.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Jacobs, Harriet. 1987 [1861]. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Momaday, N. Scott. 1969. *The Way to Rainy Mountain.* Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Strumbo, Carol. 1992. "Learning To Be At Home: Oral Histories of a Black Community." *Social Issues in the English Classroom.* C. Mark Hurlburt and Samuel Totten, eds. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. 99-121.

Underhill, Ruth M. 1985 [1936]. *Papago Woman.* Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press.

Valle, Ramon. 1997. *Ethnic Diversity and Multiculturalism: Crisis or Challenge.* New York, NY: American Heritage Custom Publishing.

Woolf, Virginia. 1987 [1929]. *A Room of One's Own.* San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace and Company.

Yagelski, Robert. 2000. *Literacy Matters: Writing and Reading the Social Self.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Marguerite Guzman Bouvard

Reflections on Being a Grandmother

This essay is both about the close bond between a grandmother with disabilities and her grandchild and also about the women who walked before me, my mother as a grandmother and my own grandmother, both of whom served as extraordinary role models.

Witches and Birthing

When my six-year-old granddaughter comes to visit us from her home in London twice a year, my study floor becomes a vast housing complex with my daughter's old doll-house furniture and miniature families scattered around the room. We spend mornings with the door shut for privacy and the scenes are more intense and vivid than *Shrek 1* and *2*. I am the witch, kidnapping the children as I crow in my high-pitched voice. There are often mass kidnappings and rescues that Ariel directs. I build a jail for witches out of an old box.

Ariel has recently become interested in the birthing process because my daughter-in–law, Mary Rosser, is an obstetrician and also because Ariel has moved beyond the stage of bathroom humor into the world of "boobies" as she refers to breasts. I am Dr. Rosser, hurrying to deliver the triplets my granddaughter's doll is expecting. (I have had to show her that babies usually come out head-first.) She calls me, "Dr. Rosser, come quickly, my babies are coming." And as Dr. Rosser breezes in all concern, Ariel is already moaning and pushing, "Uh, Uh, Uh." Then of course, there is much nursing as the dollies take off their tops and the babies go "shulp, shulp, shulp."

Sometimes the dollhouse families need to take refuge from the marauding witch and then we hide in the forest. I take leaves off my hibiscus plant and create a sanctuary. Or they take a slow ride down the river Seine in Paris in my slipper.

If her mother or grandfather opens the door, Ariel will say, "Mommy (or grandpa) I love you, but will you please go away."

I bring in little scraps of my quilting material and we use them to create swimming pools and fields. I bring in empty boxes for ambulances and fast cars. The hours slip by and then invariably I have to make lunch or dinner. "Oh why do we have to eat," Ariel protests. "I don't want to stop."

Our play is uncensored and directed by my little granddaughter's musings and discoveries. "Let's pretend the children are really naughty and slip out of school," she chimes. "This little boy asks the teacher if he can go and get a drink, but he really goes outside to meet one of his friends."

When we drive Ariel and her mother to the airport for their trip back to London, Ariel and I sit in the back seat and continue our saga. I rather wish my daughter and husband wouldn't hear my high-pitched voice preparing for a wedding, a ball or a birth, but we draw out our special time together.

I write to her every week and tell her what the dollies are doing, what disastrous events have happened in the attic where they are wintering and how they cannot become pregnant until she returns to Boston.

Behind a Glass Wall

Our flights of imagination are what I can give Ariel, for I do not have the physical ease to spend the entire day with her or take her to exciting places. Now that Ariel can read and write, she is fascinated by science as well as art. I can't accompany her to the Children's Museum she enjoys so much or to the park like my husband does for walking slowly for 30 minutes is a good day for me, and 10 or 15 minutes is more the norm. Ariel radiates energy and enthusiasm; she runs, skips and leaps on the way to the park and rushes from one exhibit to another in the museums around Boston. While she and her grandfather are at the museum, I am taking long naps. "Why do you always nap?" she asks me. "Because I'm tired," I answer.

I tend to have a slight tremor when fatigued and I have noticed her imitating me. However she is still too young for me to explain my limitations other than the fact that I need long rests and can't go out with her and her grandfather.

When I think of her delight and excitement at the Science Museum or the Children's Museum as she stands enraptured before the exhibits, and my husband takes videos of her, I often feel bereft. But always when Ariel returns from these adventures she bursts in the door with her usual excitement and calls out, "Nonna will you play with me now." We have our own private world. She and I know that what matters are these times and not the things I cannot do.

Ariel has only a vague sense of my disabilities that are neurogenic and musculoskeletal; fibromyalgia and Intersititial Cystitis, affecting my immune system, my stamina and my ability to stand or walk. They leave me with very little energy. If it's difficult for adults to understand my situation because I don't have any visible signs of a physical condition such as crutches, it is even more

perplexing for children. The constant physical pain of fibromyalgia is invisible as is my perpetual exhaustion. I often feel as if I am looking at the world through a glass wall that separates me from all of the people who move about with such ease without having to think about how to negotiate the most mundane acts.

When Ariel is with us, my whole energy is directed towards our secret adventures in my study. She keeps my spirits soaring even when fatigue grips me and I am longing for a rest.

But if I am unable to take her places, I nevertheless have a feverish imagination that has remained undiminished and which feeds my precious times with her. Best of all, I can give her a different kind of attention than her overburdened single mother. When we are together, she is the center of the world, directing our games with all the self-assurance of someone who is deeply cherished.

Once a year she visits us in France where we have a small apartment in the Alps. While I rest afternoons, she churns the pool water in the local hotel because she is very athletic like all the women in our family. Afterwards, she and I settle down to our private world. I give her an old tea carton and some playing cards and we construct a movie theater. She prefers these games to playing with toys. I make people out of matches I split in four. I remember how my mother once made me an exquisite doll's house out of cardboard she covered with fabric that had cellophane windows and real curtains. I may not have my mother's buoyant walk or seemingly limitless vigor, but I have her hands and her imagination. Playing with Ariel and finding ways to adjust to my physical condition, I feel surrounded by my own grandmother and by my mother who left me such riches.

The Women Who Walked Before Me

I grew up in an all female household with my grandmother, my mother, my sister and I. My grandmother, Anna Guzman, came from Trieste, Italy to live with us in Wilmette, Illinois when I was nine years old. She carried herself like royalty and claimed space for herself at a time when women were supposed to stay at home. She entered a new landscape and what must have seemed like strange customs as if she had lived there all her life. Coming from a multilingual society she spoke German, Italian, Slovene and French so that she seemed to pick up English and acquired friends in what she considered "the right circles" very quickly.

My grandmother lived through two world wars, losing her husband in World War I and during World War II, experiencing the German and then Yugoslav Occupation of Trieste where I was born. She never spoke of the hunger and deprivation of those times and which I witnessed when I visited my great aunt in Trieste as a teenager, observing how she still would hoard food as if it were gold. Rather she spoke of her triumphs. She mimed the German officer trying to requisition her apartment on Via Cavana, as she stood before me barking his questions in a threatening voice and then replying with great

dignity in her perfect German that the officer was at the wrong address.

People tended to retreat before my grandmother because of her regal air and her sense of entitlement. She was beautiful, statuesque and could either charm with her gracious smile when necessary or reduce people to apologetic murmurs when she was offended.

When I was in grammar school I was frequently in trouble for I was rather wild. After one of my visits to the principal's office, my grandmother would get dressed up and "invade" my school. She entered as if she owned the place, smiling graciously and speaking with my teachers. When she left, they were invariably beaming and treated me with utter kindness. I never knew what transpired during those conversations.

When I was hospitalized with a burst appendix in the next town, she would walk to visit me daily, the equivalent of several train stops. I always see her taking her favorite long walks, for she was an active and buoyant person even into her eighties.

By the time my mother Valerie became a grandmother, she was the vice president of marketing for a catalogue company specializing in a line of dresses that she also designed. She too had adapted to a new environment when we first moved to the United States and my father promptly left us. She managed to find work and progress in her chosen field in a male dominated society. She continued her heavy schedule but always managed to fly in from New York City to Wellesley, Massachusetts weekends to be with my children. She would arrive Friday night; Saturday morning at 5: 00 a.m. they would wake her with shrieks of joy and spend the day playing with her.

As they grew up, they would fly into New York City to take in the circus, the theater, and roam around the city with her. My mother even took my niece to Woodstock during the sixties (stuffing her ears with cotton).

A Different Model

Both my mother and grandmother were blessed with vitality, a spirit of adventure, and defiance gathering their grandchildren in their wake like magnets. Although they have left me such an important legacy, I cannot help but compare myself with these two women when I think of my limitations. But if I do not have their physical ease, they left me with models of strength and adaptability that serve me well in coping with my illnesses.

I am continually adjusting to my condition, revising my life so that I can pursue my passion of writing nonfiction and poetry. I may work in the middle of the night, or for a half-hour a day at an odd time depending on how I am feeling that particular period. The need for reinventing myself and creating a satisfying life has given me a new compassion and understanding. I hope in the years to come, I will become a model for Ariel as my grandmother was for me.

When my daughter was hospitalized for some months last year I wished so much that we could have stayed in her London home for that period. My fatigue and my need for frequent doctor visits meant we could only visit her on

a few occasions and even these represented a big physical effort for me. But we made the most of those times. What I could give Ariel then, was a secure space in which she could cry without anyone denying her feelings. While people around her tried to console her or cheer her up, I often sat with her quietly until her tears dried as she sobbed that she missed her mother. I also respected Ariel's wish not to have me brush her tangled hair because "only mommy can comb it."

We took her out to dinner often as a treat and I would always let her give vent to her views of dressing up.

Once she put on the most outlandish outfit; a princess Jasmine costume, pink plastic heels and a jean jacket I did persuade her to wear because her midriff was bare. "But I'll look ridiculous with that jacket," she moaned. "Just until we reach the restaurant and then you can take it off," I told her. She made quite a splash walking down Gloucester street, so much like my grandmother, her head held high, secure in her own good looks, and so much like my glamorous mother arriving in our suburb dressed to the nines.

"Tell me a funny story," Ariel would frequently ask me. Just as my grandmother would regale me with stories about our family in Trieste, Ariel loves to hear stories about our family. Since she is only six, she wants to know about naughty things her mother and uncle did when they were little. She has favorites that I repeat to her delight: "When Pierre was a little boy he liked to collect acorns. Once, he kept some in his closet for a long time and when we opened the door to vacuum, we found worms coming out of them!" "Ugh" she laughs with delight. "When your mommy and uncle were little they would spray Pledge furniture polish on the rug then skate on it with their slippers!" She chortles with glee and asks for more as if they were songs she could listen to again and again. I have to keep them fairly simple because of her age. She tends to get confused between "Merica" and France she once referred to as "America with Cows."

Since my husband was born in France and I was born in Trieste, I hope to pass on our heritage as Ariel gets older, and hopefully French and Italian as my grandmother did to me. I want to give her a sense of belonging to a world much wider than her own in London, and in a culture that does not take kindly to "foreigners" including my American daughter who looks both Italian and French. Ariel loves to look at the quilt I made her mother with photos of the harbor of Trieste, my mother and I, my grandmother, my daughter and I in many different settings. In time I will make her one of her own with photos of the important people in her life.

Like my mother, my daughter and myself, Ariel has a very strong artistic streak. She loves to make collages and once took some silvery bits of paper to make her abstract version of the snow-covered mountains that shimmer through our apartment window. Her favorite occupation is to busy herself with her paints and pencils, retreating into her own private world. My mother was a visual artist in the rare times she had to herself as a single mother and my daughter is an actress who also has a career in voice. Once I was with Ariel when

she was busily drawing. Suddenly she burst into a tearful rage," It's not right. It's awful. I hate it." As a poet and writer, I could respect her upset. "Darling," I said, "I have many artist friends and they are often disappointed by what they are trying to do. It's very hard to draw what you see in your imagination, but I can assure you it's normal to get upset and that your drawing is beautiful." She calmed down a bit. Later she told me, "I like it."

I always have art supplies waiting for her when she visits and we set up a table and chair where she can draw, cut paste, staple and create.

When we go out for drives she shares my love and wonder at the landscape, especially the colors. "It's pitch green out," she once remarked as we drove home through a mountain pass one evening. Or she will say, "Look at the orange," while gazing at a fading sunset. I too am in love with color and it is a central part of the quilts I am always working on for I am a quilt artist.

I know that in the years to come she and I will have discussions about the creative life, conversations I couldn't have with my daughter just because I was her mother. As a grandmother, I will be able to talk with Ariel about the difficult process of writing and painting and she won't feel that I am either judging her or intruding on her space. Oh, this is one of the joys of being a grandmother. I have a long life behind me filled with rich experience that I can share with her, and along with my husband I can be a source of security in her world as a child of separated parents.

My daughter doesn't really enjoy art exhibits and this is something I look forward to doing with Ariel even though I will have to sit on the benches the museum provides most of the time. As Ariel grows older I look forward to sharing my extensive collection of art books with her and taking her to art museums. Even at the tender age of 6 she has gotten to know the names of some impressionist painters like Seurat, and I have given her art kits based upon the work of this group of artists.

But running through my life with her is the leitmotif of anxiety and feelings of inadequacy as well as of loss. I am unable to travel to London as my husband does almost every other month for I do not have the stamina. I see her only two or three times a year for a few days at a time, a week at the most. I am generally at peace with the physical limitations my illness imposes on me, but I cannot help but feel a terrible sadness that I can't see Ariel more often.

The last time she left Wellesley after a visit she wrapped her arms around me and held me as if she didn't wish to let me go. I felt the same. The old adages about quality time sound very good intellectually, but my arms long to hug her more often, and I want to be a larger part of her life before she becomes a teenager, busy with her friends and a new life.

Continuities

Among the blessings of coming from a lineage of extraordinary women are the continuities I see in the lives and personalities of my daughter and granddaughter and my own mother and grandmother. Ariel has my grand-

mother's sense of entitlement. I remember visiting my grandmother in Trieste when she had moved back to the apartment she shared with her sister. She marched ahead of me when I boarded the train for France looked in a compartment and cleared out all the people. "My granddaughter needs this space," she said from her heights and with that smile; surprisingly, a man and two women left without a word of protest. When my husband went to pick up Ariel at school during one of his visits she queried, "Where's the car?" "There is no car," her grandfather answered, for Ariel and her mommy live in the midst of London and use public transportation. "Carry me" she replied with aplomb and of course her grandfather was only too pleased to hoist her on his shoulders as if it was his role in life to wait on her, shades of Anna Guzman.

My daughter doesn't remember my grandmother because she died when Laurie was only four and she lived far away from us. However she and my mother were extremely close and my daughter wears the ring I bought my mother when she became divorced. Our three names are inscribed inside; Valerie, Guita, Laurie. I see my daughter growing into my mother's face and mirroring her gestures. I see in her my mother's innate practicality, her bent for engineering as well as her artistic streak. I see Ariel already becoming a writer as well as an artist, for she keeps a nightly journal, and I see how closely she observes people she meets and the world around her.

One of the great strengths of the female lineage is that there is always someone that has gone ahead showing us the way. Once when I was going though a bad patch with my illness, I dreamed of my mother walking ahead of me in a mountainous terrain and I knew that even though she had died so many years ago, she was accompanying me.

In coping with the limits on my ability to have a so called normal life, I always see my grandmother walking before me, remembering how she was widowed at the age of 30 and lived through wars that took many family members as well as destroying her way of life.

Even with my many physical problems, I hope I will be an example of overcoming difficulties, continuing to be a productive writer and a now low key social activist, other trodden paths for Ariel.

Once, when Ariel was visiting us, I showed her rosary beads that had been in my family since the seventeenth century and that I had mounted on some old lace and framed. "Those will be for your mother," I told her. She looked at me beaming and said, "then I will have them, and then I can give them to my children." She understands generations for she is close to her father's mother and even has a great-gran in London. My mother is frequently woven into our conversations because her handwork is reflected in my daughter's old doll-house toys and throughout our home. Through our conversations and our play, Ariel has gained a sense of belonging and comfort.

Ariel may be puzzled by my disabilities, but as she grows older I will explain them to her for what they are, severe physical impediments that do not impinge upon my spirit or my ability to love and accept her unquestioningly.

Folio

Photo of Katherine Allen and grandchildren, Robert and Winifred Audrey Cullen, circa 1935. From the collection of K. Krasny.

Editor's Notes

Proleptic Time and the Lives of Grandmothers

Centered on the world's stage,
she sings to her loves and beloveds,
to her foes and detractors:
However I am perceived and deceived,
however my ignorance and conceits,
lay aside your fears that I will be undone,
for I shall not be moved.

—Maya Angelou, "Our Grandmothers"

In this special themed issue on Grandmothers, our writers in *Folio* speak of a fascinating range of experiences, of generational and cultural differences voiced in innovative forms.

Poems by yaya Yao are beautifully crafted and sensory. In her poems, "thanks" and "turned," the narrator explores immigrant experience through the lenses of a granddaughter's desires juxtaposed against a grandmother's dreams.

Trela Anderson writes a moving personal essay titled "Sugar Bread Dreams," an account of her personal relationship with the Langston Hughes poem "Harlem." Anderson's narrative moves into memory, evoking the image of sugar bread in Hughes' poem as a continuous thread in a story about her grandmother and adopted grandson.

Robbie Kahn writes her "Aziz Journal" from the narrative perspective of a grandmother. "Aziz Journal" is a deeply contemplative and evocative work, one that emanates an intense physicality in the writing, a sensory awareness of the body and the world that is keenly felt. Kahn brings us close to the experience

of growing to know a grandchild through the sensual details of memory, touch, love and trust.

In "Re-constructing Romania" Karen Krasny has created a "Readers' Theatre in Five Voices," a unique dramatic form for exploring the theme of foreign adoption. This is an autobiographical account of Krasny's own experiences of becoming an adoptive mother of two Romanian born boys and bringing them back to Canada. The story took on deep historical and personal significance when Krasny found herself in a region close to her paternal grandmother's birthplace and in proximity to her mother-in-law's former home in Ukraine prior to her internment in a Nazi work camp.

Renee Norman's beautiful poem "Fresh Sheets" also evokes memory and loss, the strong sense of a grandmother who is somehow still with her granddaughter, somewhere in the continued rituals of changing sheets, not only in remembrance of a grandmother's death, but in the present, the act of making up a bed with fresh sheets becoming a gift of the living: "laid with fresh ripe raspberries/the smell of mustard basted onto brisket."

Laurie Kruk writes a poetic contemplation set in Canada of the history of a grandmother, Baba, originally from the former Soviet Union. The rhythms of Baba's speech are caught brilliantly in this work titled "Time Coming." Baba's aging and dying in a nursing home coincides with a granddaughter giving birth. The mother becomes "the timekeeper," and what remains breathes "in the beats/of mother time."

Karen Krasny writes in her introduction of "the sense that the past impinges on the present in ways that ground future possibilities." This perspective of proleptic time is evident in the works of the writers in this issue of *Folio*. The writings form a historiographic poeisis through ancestral time in the re-imaginings and reconstructions of the histories of grandmothers, histories of trauma, hardship, joy, sorrow, mourning, loss, hope, infinite possibility.

—Rishma Dunlop

yaya Yao

thanks

a small pyramid of Sunkist oranges and a sharp pear hug
on a red plastic lotus
stout stemmed, painted gold edges

a borrowed vase half full of government water and yellow purple
chrysanthemums

a styrofoam box of beancurd & wheat gluten
salt/curry/sweetandsour white/yellow/red
lying to the dead chicken abalone pork goose

three bows, in unison

sandalwood in six twigs

we are the
only living here, we negotiate terrifying details
under our breaths, only the dead
to witness the scraping efficiency of our thanks giving
they look at us with eyes our nerves
race to interpret
from the damp depths
of the inadequacies we were so relieved to find
names for
they offer these again, if the nerves might disrupt
or
they press their tongues soft into flesh, against
others

my mother cries, kneels to be eye level to her father's mother, her father's father
wipes their lacquered photos with toilet paper damp

top to bottom
their faces
the name of their hometowns,
their names,
the names of their children.
top to bottom
with toilet paper wetted with boiled water from a
plastic coke bottle.

we are back, she tells them,
after forty years imagine you here.
the dust of your bodies sits in vases, in separate concrete cubes
a low corner of a room tiled ancestors
this is your rest
she introduces me to you both
this is our meeting place

how do i give thanks
how many boxes of food
how many farmed flowers from Colombia
how many dyed fruit from california
for the tightness in your muscles built to give me better that i might
Teach Native English for 250 hong kong dollars an hour that i might
come here to touch your cool stone

the woman does not know we are here, we hear
her in the next room clearing away our offerings
the shush of fruit into bags, the slinking of plate against marble table
we come to her and she starts, apologises
we are closing
the incense is fallen
as we leave we see the women bring
the fruit to the elderly
the vegetarian food to the dogs. clench
ma's eyes, mine
ma says, next time just fruit
why, i ask, you like dogs
the women are happy
the dogs are happy
we laugh, dyed ripe
rush to come away from
their easy
togetherness.

yaya Yao

turned

with thanks to Langston Hughes

in this place where the girl was loved into soft laziness her Ahma's dreams
are the transluscent shells of deep fried fava beans
crashing around her feet.

immigrant nightmares come
to teeth, at Ahma's throat
the granddaughter has become them wanting
a job she's never heard of
a lover with no standing
an apartment.

keep warm and eat more
are how she loves the flesh the girl is open to it,
grateful

whispering yesterday she weaves a fine net of her disappointment.
the girl is to cast it into Ahma's ambitions, the possibilities of this promise-
place
the glistening of this frozen path.

to struggle so long and far,
the absurdity of her obstacles now make her laugh, almost
the granddaughter's desires: space, voice, mannish clothing
they slice up her sleep

she confronts them with prayer

realised in the girl's monthly fever
is a current of words nothing seems able to press back
more betrayal
it is all in english
even in the unconscious, it is all
                    it is simply confirmation
the girl is a browning fruit, nestled in the humid folds of her weaving
smooth skin bursts with liquid apology too
heavy to fly from turning dreams

in these moments when the girl is lying with the sun out
Ahma pauses to examine the shades of her turning, browns and yelllows,
the patterns mold flowers
to embrace
her legacy will be jewelled with no stone she honours

for her fever, she
feeds the child soup
feeds herself and in
ginger heat, they sweat.

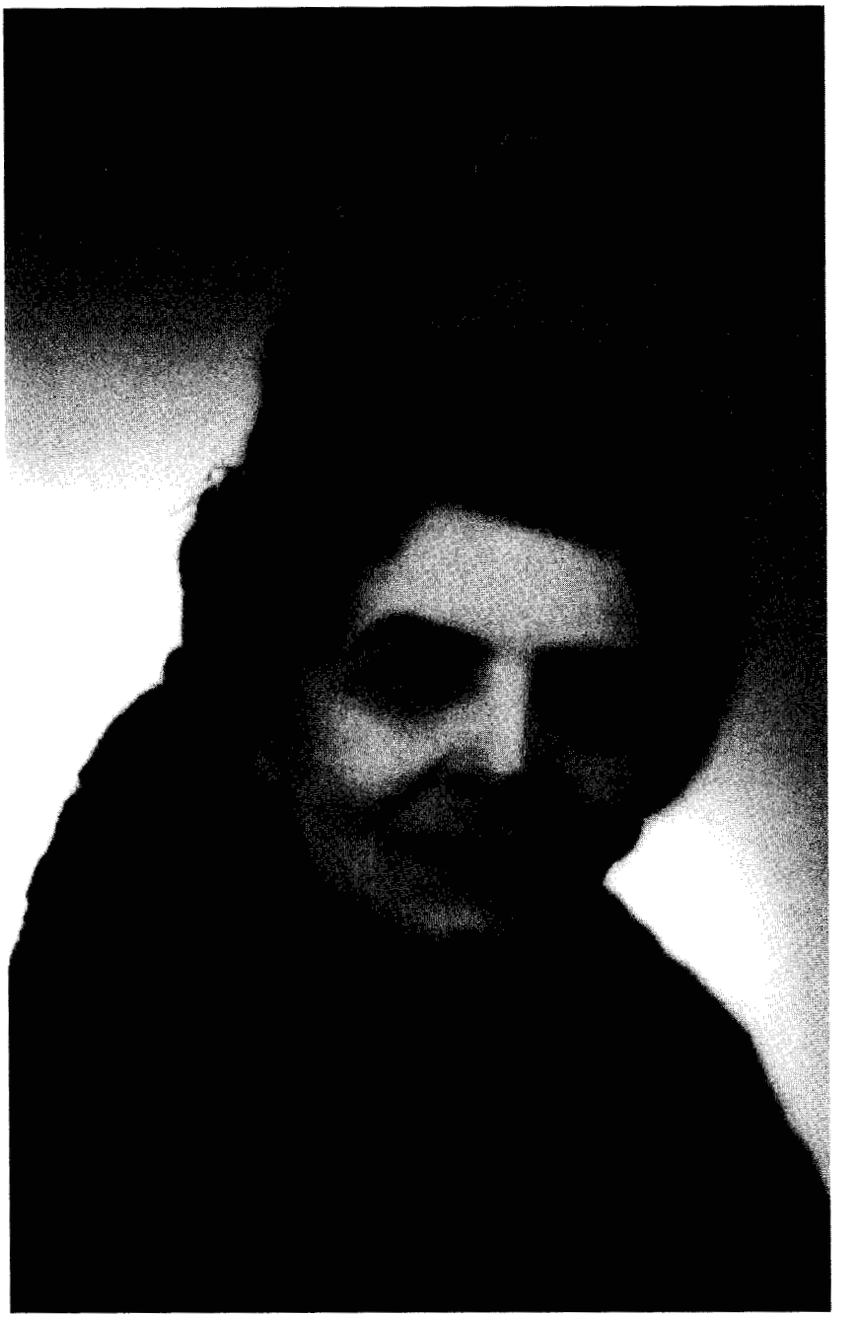


Photo of Wilhelmina Cullen, circa 1949. From the collection of K. Krasny.

Trela Anderson

Sugar Bread Dreams

> "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..."
>
> —James 1:27

In 1991, as a sophomore in college, I read the poem "Harlem," by Langston Hughes for the first time. Actually, I had glanced at the lines long before then, having memorized them as part of an assignment in sixth grade. I remember standing in front of the classroom, looking up at the ceiling, and reciting the poem in that sing-songy voice that we as children so often use. Songs are easier to memorize than poems, I think, so we lyrically transform every other mode of expression into a song.

At age eleven, it was difficult for me to view Hughes' poem as anything other than a song. It rhymed and rolled easily off my tongue. These characteristics, accompanied by a choppy fourteen-line structure, made the poem look approachable on the page. Also, the fact that many of its images conjured up food was appealing. When I got an opportunity to really *read* the poem, to scan its lines for some underlying meaning, I realized that I wanted this poem to mean something personal to me. I wanted a relationship with it:

Harlem
What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

***

My grandmother dreamed dreams often, but she referred to them as "visions," often reciting, *Without a vision, the people perish.* She believed that we should always believe in something bigger than ourselves, even when we couldn't yet see it with our eyes. She had spent most of her years living by such a principle. In her twenties, she left Hernando, Mississippi—a bold move for a black woman of her age and time. She moved into a house and worked odd jobs to survive, believing that one day things would get better, that something would change.

Such was the case when she legally adopted her nearly two-year old grandson Terrence. It was a decision she had contemplated for a while, praying intensely and going several hours without food. She had raised five sons and a daughter of her own, mostly alone, and initially wanted to spend her latter years free from the worries and stresses that come with being responsible for someone else's life.

Grandma was a born care giver. I remember her spending hours on the telephone praying for her fellow church members. If someone were ill, she visited them in the hospital. She sometimes opened her home to those others would fear or label "suspect" because she was never afraid to love. Even before adopting Terrence, she would speak of the possibility of becoming a foster parent, particularly to the "crack babies" she heard about via news specials and reports. When Terrence came along, he was the fulfillment of her natural inclinations—her beautiful gift wrapped in marred paper.

Terrence was my uncle Bubba's son. We met him for the first time when he, his mother Cathy, and Uncle Bubba stopped by our house one night. Grandma was there, too. At the time, Terrence was only a few months old and peculiar looking. His body was thin, shriveled and wrinkly, and his face bore a grimace, as though he already knew something of the world's harshness and was eagerly awaiting the ability to speak, an opportunity to complain. A nurse who works with my sister says most babies born into poverty or other harsh conditions have such a look. "It's like they emerge from the wound knowing something ain't right," she said, "as if God has pre-equipped them with the maturity they need to handle their circumstances."

When Terrence left the house that night, Grandma commented on his appearance. "Lora, that baby is funny-looking to me," she told my mother. "You know what he looks like?"

"What, Mama?"

"A little spider monkey," Grandma said.

"A what?"

"A spider monkey," she said, again. "You know . . . those little monkeys with the skinny arms and legs and a big head. I think they have them at the zoo. You know. A spider monkey."

"Oh, Mama, you're being mean," Mama giggled. "He's a cute little boy. He just needs to be better taken of."

"I guess so," Grandma said, reluctantly. "He mighty funny-looking to me, though." Grandma paused for a minute. "Lora," she said, "who does that baby look like to you? Is it Bubba or his Mama?"

"Well," Mama responded. "He looks just like Bubba to me. He has Bubba's small head and long, narrow face. They look just alike. He's a cute little boy to me," she said again. "He just needs somebody to take better care of him."

"Well," Grandma said, "since I found out I got another little Grandson out there, I need to go ahead and put his name in my vessel."

Grandma's "vessel" was a ceramic vase stocked with silk flowers that stood on the night stand next to her bed. It had been there for years. As a child, I did not know its significance and would meddle with it insipidly, arranging and re-arranging the flowers according to their various shapes and colors, sometimes taking bundles of them out of the vase and scattering them along the floor. Finally, Grandma revealed to me that the vase stuffed with flowers was her prayer vessel. "Try not to mess with Grandma's flowers, okay, baby," she said to me one day after witnessing the mess I'd made. "That's Grandma's prayer vessel." Inside were small balls of white paper, containing people's names. My name was on one of those pieces of paper. So was that of my mom, dad, sister Kesha, cousin Tarja, and all of Grandma's sons—Terry, Gary, Claudell, Herman, Jr., and Edison—, my granddaddy and Grandma's ex-husband, Herman, Sr., and a slew of others, including famous people, such as Aretha Franklin and Tina Turner. Every morning Grandma awoke to anoint her vessel with holy oil and pray that God would meet the needs of each of us. After meeting Terrence, she added his name.

* * *

It was only after attending a special church service that Grandma decided to pursue Terrence's adoption. A woman prophet was preaching that night and towards the end of her sermon, she signaled for a few people to approach the altar so that she could pray for them individually. One of those persons was Grandma. "God has specific instructions for you," she told her. "He wants you to go ahead and get custody of your grandson. And . . . Yes, he *is* indeed your grandson. God says that if you don't get him and get him soon, he's gonna lose his hearing."

We had received news of Terrence contracting numerous ear infections, but assumed it was nothing serious and that he had received proper treatments. We had also heard rumors of his cooking exploits, how he waddled into the kitchen of his mother's tiny apartment on some mornings, dressed in little more

than a soiled, baggy diaper, in an attempt to open the cabinets and reach for a skillet. Sometimes, he even reached upwards to try and turn on the stove. When we first heard the story, we laughed, but cautiously. "What kind of child is that," Grandma asked. "He must be a smart little something . . . I ain't never in my life heard of such, have you? Why in the world would a little baby like that have to try and fix himself something to eat?"

"I don't know," Mama said. "He must be something else."

"Well, all I know is that when a baby gets to the point where he has to try and fix himself something to eat, something is wrong," Grandma said. "That means it's time for him to go."

It wasn't long before Grandma began attending court sessions and signing legal documents to get custody of Terrence. It was her labor of love and obedience towards God. She knew it wouldn't be easy, especially financially, but was once again willing to trust God and exercise her faith.

***

We all knew the real reason that Terrence came to live with Grandma, but we were hesitant to discuss it, at least in his presence. Grandma had prayed and fasted for years that her son Bubba would stop using drugs. *Bubba, why don't you stop using 'that stuff,'* or *How much longer are you gonna be on 'that stuff,'* she would ask. He had gone to a drug rehabilitation center up near Nashville once or twice, but always returned to Memphis and his familiar crowd, becoming re-entangled with his past sins.

Grandma didn't believe that Terrence should have to suffer for his dad's mistakes. So, in 1988, he officially moved in with her, a woman fifty years his senior. At the time, she lived on Inez Street, a neighborhood inhabited mostly by the elderly. Yet, there were lots of children there. In the mornings, you could spot them walking or riding their bicycles in droves to school. During the spring and summer, they ran out of their houses, frantically, chasing the ice cream truck. I didn't realize it then, but Grandma and Terrence had become part of a new trend, particularly within the black community, that of grandparents raising their grand kids.

Their relationship was not without antagonisms, particularly at mealtime. Terrence had become accustomed to eating much differently from Grandma, often demanding that she fix his favorite meal, sugar bread, which consisted merely of a slice of white bread sprinkled with white sugar. One day while Grandma was preparing dinner, Terrence vehemently insisted on having sugar bread as opposed to the spaghetti and meatballs that Grandma had prepared. "I want sugar bread, Grandma," he mouthed.

"You want what, baby," Grandma asked, moving her ear closer to his lips in an effort to better understand him.

" I want sugar bread, Grandma," he repeated, softly.

"You want sugar bread, huh? What's that?"

"I want sugar bread, Grandma," Terrence said again, becoming frustrated.

"I don't know nothing about no sugar bread, Terrence," Grandma said. "I ain't never had none of that."

"I want sugar bread," Terrence yelled. "Sugar bread!"

"We don't eat sugar bread around here, Terrence," Grandma answered, raising her voice above his. "We eat real food, not sugar bread! That's dog food!" Grandma shoved the plate of spaghetti in his direction. "Now you either eat this or eat nothing." After a while, Terrence settled into his chair and slowly began eating the spaghetti that Grandma set before him.

* * *

Terrence and Grandma spent the next three or four years getting to know one another, each of them becoming more and more intrigued by the other's behavior. "He's such an old man," Grandma said of him. "He's like a young boy trapped in an old man's body." Terrence liked to wear old polyester suits as a child. And he collected paper, plain white paper, which he carried around in a large brown paper bag. On several occasions, Grandma tried to throw out the sack, considering it clutter, but Terrence wouldn't allow it. Those papers were important to him. He used it to practice his writing, often opening the bag and pulling out a random piece to scribble his name or draw a stick-figured animal. Once he was done, he returned his masterpiece to the bag, folding down its top, and carrying it with him wherever he went. After a while, Grandma began finding what seemed like mounds of paper throughout the house. "I don't know what I'm going to do with all of this paper Terrence is leaving around the house," she said. "Why would someone want to keep and carry around a bag of paper. I just don't understand." Mama said that Terrence was becoming a packrat like Grandma who kept everything she ever owned, protecting it.

Now, she had been given the assignment of protecting Terrence.

* * *

The day that Grandma called Mama on the phone to discuss Terrence's future college plans was a funny one, especially since he was only in the fourth grade. It seemed that Terence after watching the NCAA Basketball tournament on television, had decided that he wanted to attend Duke University. "He really likes taking things apart and putting them back together," Grandma said, concluding that Terrence would become an engineer. "I don't know when the Lord might call me home, Lora," she told my mother, "but I just wanted you to know that I do want Terrence to go to college. If I'm not here, y'all be sure to help him fill out the papers."

"We will," Mama assured her. "We will."

Robbie Pfeufer Kahn

Aziz Journal

6/22/01

The fan drones as I listen with my son, his wife, and their newborn to a CD of ocean waves. It is hot in their apartment over the Finn Bar in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, this day after the solstice. Right now Aziz is nursing, nestled in a sling that is like a womb. You can see, through the light blue polka dot cloth, his form—bumps and ridges. My son Levin said when he feels Aziz through the cloth, it reminds him of feeling Amina's belly when she was pregnant. The midwives at Elizabeth Seton Birth Center in New York City had taught them how to palpate her belly.

Before the events of Amina's pregnancy, birth, and Aziz's breastfeeding get silted over with the accumulation of days, I want to start writing things down. Aziz will already be two months old tomorrow. He is a long baby who grows "wide and then tall" when he has a growth spurt, which happens sometimes right in the course of a day. He is caramel colored with silky black hair, abundant, that was there from birth. His hands and feet are large and shapely and his feet are as expressive as hands as he opens his toes wide or curls them over as he reacts to things around him. His whole body speaks; he holds nothing back and this wonderful vulnerability, for a baby who is respected, or terrible vulnerability, for a mistreated baby, is a lesson in openness. When Aziz is excited over you speaking to him, his breathing grows loud, his nostrils flare, his arms and legs, fingers and toes become active, and his eyes look with rapt attention. Sometimes his brow is clear and smooth; sometimes he frowns as he concentrates hard on something. His full, wide mouth is wavy like a line of Arabic calligraphy that hangs on the wall in their apartment. At times, fleetingly, like the shadow of clouds passing over mountains, he looks like Levin and sometimes like Amina.

Today, we took a walk before the day got hot. Aziz was upright, nestled against Amina's chest in a Bjorn baby carrier. Even though he rode low in the carrier, he kept his head turned to the left and watched the procession of buildings we passed. The neighborhood of Carroll Gardens is leafy with brownstones in rows, many of which are surrounded by graceful iron fences and small gardens. Aziz tried to keep himself awake, though his eyelids drooped from time to time; in the effort not to fall asleep he frowned, drawing his delicate dark eyebrows together, which puckered his forehead and gave him a thoughtful expression.

Yesterday, Levin, Amina, and I talked about how memories of childhood are vivid and short, like the mini-videos that Levin takes with his digital camera. Amina remembers, from before the age of two years, lying in bed next to her mom and hearing the sound of pigeons outside the window. Levin remembers the "junk truck" that came to the stable in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where his dad and I had boarded a horse. Levin was three years old. He remembers hay everywhere, a silo, a dirt road, fencing, and the truck with pictures of the variety of pops the ice cream man sold and how there was a hole in the truck to throw garbage away. Levin asked me if I had any memories, which was unusual. Usually he doesn't seek out knowing things about my life, which is entirely fair. I told a good memory of being in my father's arms, held securely against his chest so that his heartbeat and his breath seemed to pass right through me. Levin said of Aziz, "he's never alone." He and Amina carry him everywhere; author John Sears calls it, writing about attachment parenting, "baby wear." They hold him in the sling, in one of the carriers, or they lie with him in bed, and of course there is the frequent nursing. When Levin and Amina took Aziz for his first pediatric visit, Levin wrote on the medical form—where it foolishly asked "Occupation"— "Breastfeeding." A month ago, in May, we were sitting at the kitchen table with Aziz in the sling, sucking on Levin's finger. Levin said, "Soon milk will be coming out of my fingers." What a beautiful impossible image of abundance—ten fingers, ten father's fingers, spouting milk.

But back to the idea of how close up and immediate the world is to a baby. Psychoanalyst and author Daniel Stern explains that for babies the part stands for the whole; they perceive the world metonymically. This ability is characteristic of babies from 0-2 months, when babies possess what Stern calls an "emergent sense of self." He says that we never lose this way of perceiving; it remains with us throughout our lives, especially when we fall in love and become preoccupied with close-up features—the lover's eyes, or hands or hollow where the neck meets the shoulder blades. Stern believes that this close-up entranced perception is the seat of creativity and the source of all genuine learning throughout life. I think that's why writing or reading poetry touches us so deeply, because it returns us to that early emergent sense of self when the world comes in so vividly.

So because of how the past gets silted over with the accumulation of days,

I'm wondering if I can write mini-videos like the ones Levin takes, ones that resemble the way babies perceive the world. But where to begin? My journals have tended to be as detailed and narratively as long as the life experiences they describe, so writing them takes as long as living them does and then I have no time to read them. A man I once heard on PBS records every single thing he does every day, including how many liters he pees each time. When asked about traveling, he said, "Oh no, I can't really go anywhere, there would be too much to record."

When Aziz was two days old, Levin gave him to me to hold for a long time. Levin put on "The Harder They Come," an album his dad and I had played all the time when he was a baby. We even had taken him to the movie when he was six months old, during which he mostly nursed and slept, but Levin attributes his love of reggae music to that outing. I was dressed in a long khaki skirt with a white shirt and khaki vest and I stood on the futon in the living room so my feet wouldn't be sore due to rheumatoid arthritis. I swayed back and forth. Eric, Levin's dad, stood beside me and a breeze moved through the room and I felt taken back to the time when I was a new mother. I was grateful to Levin for putting that music on; perhaps he, too, was revisiting his time as a young baby in my arms. I became very relaxed, really for the first time with Aziz. Up until that moment I found myself unexpectedly like Tolstoy when he first saw his newborn, the little tomato-colored baby with a scrunched up wizened looking face. Not that Aziz looked like that, but what I shared with Tolstoy was a feeling of strangeness, as if Aziz were alien, not kin, an unexpected emotion because normally I love babies. I realized at the Elizabeth Seton Birth Center (I had arrived by plane from Vermont, missing the birth by a few hours) that those alien feelings visited me because Aziz wasn't my own baby. Later that first day, I had discussed this odd turn of events with a friend and she understood entirely. I needed her understanding because everyone I had talked to before I left Vermont said, "You'll see, it's better with a grandchild, it's so much better than with your own." I think that hormones have a lot to do with a newborn's appeal, that they draw a mother and father to their baby. When Aziz was a day old, Levin said to me, "Smell his hair, isn't it amazing?" I bent over to smell Aziz's dark hair and discovered that the damp, warm odor was nothing I recognized or was drawn to, although I said, "Oh yes, it smells wonderful." Levin's hair as a baby intoxicated me and I couldn't smell it often enough. So the music Levin had put on acted like a door or a wave or a stream that swept me towards my grandmaternal feelings from the memory traces of my maternal feelings. Aziz, meanwhile, eventually became so relaxed as I held him that one arm dropped down and his mouth opened. I discovered that I didn't want to give Aziz up to Levin's dad; I'd become so attached, but eventually my hands and feet began to hurt. It had been about an hour and I remembered that I'm not that young mother I used to be. This became plain to me when later I saw a photo of these moments and I saw the lines on my face, especially the frown furrows, and my swollen knuckles.

The second time I connected with Aziz I was sitting on the futon in the bedroom, holding him so that his head was on my left, the side near the heart, and he put one little hand on my chest and kept it there. The third time was the strongest, but the least obvious. I noticed that when Aziz sighed, his expiration of breath had a double hitch to it—he took a breath in and just before his lungs filled all the way, he added another breath onto it. On my way back to Vermont I noticed that I sigh with a double hitch also. The last time I saw my father in the ICU (he died two years ago), I told him that I was breathing with him and that we are all breathing together and that breath is *ruah* in Hebrew, or spirit. And so it seemed to me that Arthur, Aziz's great grandfather, and Aziz and I were connected through the breath, one generation hitched to the other in the round of life.

6/25/01

Levin and I walked to the promenade along the East River in Brooklyn Heights, a ritzy part of the borough. Elegant brownstones with floor to ceiling windows line the street, some buildings have gaslight fixtures, big lanterns that stand alongside the stoops. The promenade looks out on the Statue of Liberty, who had her back to us; the Staten Island Ferry was chugging along as we walked, and I could see Ellis Island where my grandparents had disembarked in the early part of the last century. I could only make out a somber armory type of building, sprawling and indistinct in the haze. Suddenly I imagined what it must have been like to arrive there on a boat in steerage from Russia. And how it has taken five generations—five from Aziz to them—to arrive at this afternoon, Levin, Aziz and I, striding along, members of what I think of as a "breastfeeding ethnic community," if such a thing exists. For membership, you'd either have been breastfed, have breastfed, or be breastfeeding a child. It is a luxury to be able to pay attention to the elemental details of how a baby is fed, to take the time to notice a baby. Infant research is no more than ten to fifteen years old and in generations prior to this, at least in the West, babies were maintained, but not treated or perceived as full human beings. Or they were "presented" to use Amina's apt term, like a baby we saw at a party, all decked out in a pretty white outfit with embroidered flowers at the wrist and a little white hat, dressed as if she were a doll. Babies as dolls or mindless bundles of organic needs.

A few days ago Levin said, "If you write anything down, could I see it?" or "Could you write stuff down?" This was a hard moment for me because the invitation was such a treat, since in the past Levin often would say, scornfully, if I was giving him too much advice or having a conflict with him, "Why don't you go write about it in your journal." Then, too, Levin has not read my book, *Bearing Meaning: The Language of Birth* except for the first and last pages. Despite the temptation, I answered as I should have, "Actually I haven't been writing in my journal for a while and anyhow this is your story to write, not mine." I wasn't even at the birth, although I'd been invited, and only knew about

it through Levin's and Amina's stories.

Levin's passion that Amina breastfeed was wonderful and I'd say rare in this culture. The night of the "crisis" he called me after turning the house upside down to find their childbirth class folder. "I need, I need help," he said. A little later he called and said, "This is Aziz's last night of nursing and he's only three weeks old." In my heart I was full of despair, especially after reading in the LLL book that all the founder's children successfully breastfed their babies and I'd nursed Levin for three and a half years. I had put the childbirth books away after Aziz's birth, relieved that that act was accomplished in a fulfilling way—not even ultrasounds, and a water birth at a free-standing birth center. Now could it be that Amina would bottlefeed? This crisis came exactly in the same week that Amina's mother had stopped breastfeeding her. I'm proud that I was able to tell Amina that I supported whatever she decided to do; the important thing was that she and Aziz have a good, loving relationship. But when I see Amina and Aziz now and watch the subtle interaction between them, I don't see how it could have been the same had she not breastfed. Amina was relieved that I supported her right to choose because every pep talk I gave her just made her feel guilty. It all came down to sore nipples, and a lactation consultant helped Amina learn how to get Aziz to latch on the right way with his mouth wide open, for Amina to position him close and to hold her breast, push it forward to him, and for her to nurse one breast at each feeding instead of two so that the milk supply could go down and her breasts soften.

6/27/01

The first time I came home from Brooklyn I felt flayed for four days. Flayed like the herring I once had seen on Cape Cod. They had swum upstream to their breeding ground, a pond that spilled over a lip and down into the river or stream. I stood just at the place of the runover that sluiced down with clear water. A fish would emerge in the clear place and flip itself up over the lip and into the pond. I saw it through the water, eye staring and skin flayed by the rough passage, hanging off in tatters.

My upstream journey began with my high forceps birth that etched a resentment in my mother like the faint forceps scar on my cheek, through Levin's birth where I pushed him out myself after three hours effort, through the years of social activism on behalf of childbearing women, and through Amina's pregnancy in which the medical system hovered at the edge ready to take over. At each prenatal visit, the midwife would ask politely, "Would you like an ultrasound today?" But Amina kept true to herself and gave birth in the water, floating in between contractions, letting Aziz find his own way down through her body, eyes closed, a smile on her face as she dreamt (she told us later) of having an Afro hair style and wearing bell-bottom pants and three inch heeled boots. Amina floated in the clear place because my generation had built infrastructures so that she didn't have to swim upstream, but could simply arrive from home and shed her clothes and step into the tub. Yet Amina had to be

brave during the pregnancy and birth to go beyond her mother who had a cesarean, but the infrastructure (an ugly, but useful word) was there to use. And my generation had built it. That's why on the Saturday after I got back from New York that first trip, I wept harsh tears for the difficulty and accomplishment, grief and joy and relief that Levin and Amina had the kind of birth that would forever enrich their lives.

The second time I came home I felt good and not at all drained, but like a cell with two nuclei, one with them and one with my dog Laska. And I got mixed up—should I be in Vermont? Should I have a dog who limited my flexibility visiting? It took several days to believe that it is all right to have a life of my own.

Aziz has given me the immense instruction of seeing how open a new baby is and so completely at the mercy of grownups. He helps me get the narrative of my own babyhood in order so that I can complete it and put it aside, although of course that story lives on in me and always will—but not with such power as in the past. This instruction didn't happen with Levin because I didn't know so much about my early life then, consciously, I only knew that I wanted his childhood to be different and I could see things, by a mysterious gift, from the infant's point of view. With Aziz, even though we are separated by two generations, it's as if my babyhood and his inform each other. There is, to use a cliché, something very healing about this. As if my baby self can see, through him, how it ought to have been and that makes the past less unalterable somehow. Similarly with Aziz, I can so easily picture how it would be with other parents, or my parents, and that also makes the past less tyrannous. My parents stand as shadow images to either side of me as Aziz and I gaze at one another, but they never will have the chance to mistreat him. Like Amina, he too has arrived in the clear place.

On our trip yesterday to Prospect Park on the subway, the train went above the ground at one point. Levin was keen on me looking out the window to see the leafy hill of Carroll Gardens. I also saw Manhattan from a perspective, just like at the promenade, I'd never seen before—the East River downtown side of Manhattan (I'd grown up in midtown Manhattan, on Riverside Drive overlooking the Hudson River). It felt like a liberation, this new perspective. As if I were a planet, I'd rotated to a new position. I was in a new orbit and it almost felt heretical to dare to gaze elsewhere than where my parents had looked out.

7/26/01

Levin and Amina had sent me home to Vermont with the placenta that I froze and transported in my backpack on JetBlue airline. The placenta, densely bloody, compacted into a heart size shape, glistening amnion and chorion wrapped around part of it, umbilical cord frozen against the body of it—this I placed in a hole in the ground and Nate, who helps me with gardening, planted a magnolia tree above the placenta, a young tree that looks of all things a little

yellow, just like the newborn Aziz when he had a little jaundice.

I told Nate the story of how the soul is said by the Kabbalists to be an upside down tree with its roots in the heavens and branches on earth. To me this mystical image describes the placenta—upside down roots, since most placentas implant in the upper part of the uterus. It does seem that patriarchy draws its most powerful images from women's procreativity.

The dark red moist bloody object felt warm, even through it was frozen. I placed it in the dry, light brown, sandy soil. It didn't seem to belong there, so shiny and full of bloody tissue that gave life to Aziz, but where can a placenta go? Such profligate waste. People in the flamboyant 1970s used to make placenta stews. My midwife friend claims to have prepared some. "How did the stew taste?" I asked. "Awful," she replied. Animals eat placentas and that seems the thrifty thing to do, I thought, as I looked at that nourishment consigned to the dry earth. The moist vivid, red, shiny placenta compacted together and looking as if it could release into the big bang, the origins of matter.

8/8/01

I called Levin to find out how they are holding up in this heat wave.

"He's teething," Levin said.

"He is?"

"He chews on my fingers, drooling, and he looks so happy."

"So sweet," I replied.

"He's also learning to laugh. He goes 'he, he, he'," Levin imitated an awkward sound, like the braying of a congested donkey. "He doesn't quite know how to do it yet."

"He loves when I play the drums. First I played castanets and he cried and screamed. Then I played the drums and he became quiet."

"How interesting," I said, wondering whether Mozart was a lost cause. Probably.

"Amina just came out of the shower with him. They were in for fifteen minutes and he loved it. He showers with both of us. That shows he trusts us, doesn't it?"

"Oh yes," I said vigorously, thinking sadly of my own childhood.

"Trust, that's the first emotion, I read about it," Levin offered.

"Yes," I said, "trust."

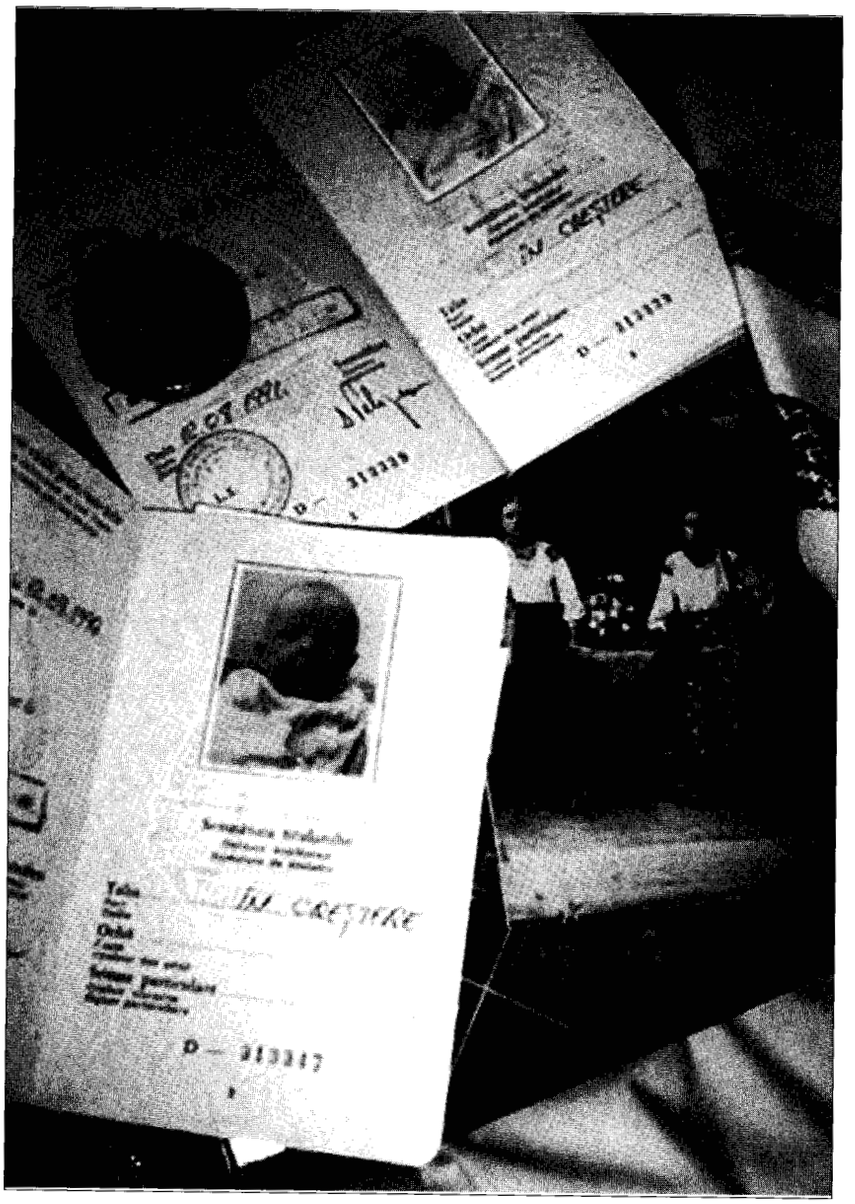


Photo: Karen Krasny

Karen Krasny

Re-constructing Romania: An Autobiographical Account of Foreign Adoption— A Reader's Theatre in Five Voices

In June 1991, I traveled to Romania with the heartfelt desire to adopt a child. This performance ethnography is a reconstruction of my lived-through experience and the events and the news reports that brought the plight of Romanian orphans to worldwide attention. Graphic depictions of the deplorable conditions in Romanian orphanages prompted international aid and throngs of prospective parents from North America, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand to pursue the foreign adoption of Romanian children. The economic conditions of Romania in the wake of a communist regime led by a notorious dictator and the often unbridled desire of first world baby-boomers to fulfill the need to be parents created a "black market" for babies and unscrupulous adoption practices. Through readers' theatre, I hope to highlight the moral and ethical tension I experienced in attempting to reconcile my husband's and my determination to become parents while coming face-to-face with a country that to most Westerners might appear stripped of its compassion to care for its own. I listened to the stories and saw firsthand the children who fell victim to abandonment, suffered institutionalized abuse, and escaped infanticide. In retrospect, while this is the story of our sons' journey from a small Hutsul village near the Carpathian mountains to a suburban home on the western Canadian prairies, it is unquestionably a story of my emotional survival as I navigated the morally contested terrain of foreign adoption. Perhaps most surprising, however, is the way in which the story of our sons' journey has woven its way throughout the fabric of our family's heritage in the intersections of generations of Western and Eastern European voices.

Implicit in the process of memory construction is "the complex social interactions and trails of ideas that that lead from the observations" which demonstrate "that perceptions are always partial" (Schratz & Walker, 1995:

25). When asked, "What was it like?" I have always replied that everyone's story is different. The basis of this memory creation relies heavily on the mental imagery evoked through a rereading of the contents of a diary that I kept during the summer of 1991. Accompanied by an interpreter and another prospective mother from Montreal, we slept at odd hours to accommodate the legal legwork and the detective efforts associated with a child search and an adoption process that consumed every waking moment. As news of adoptions closing spread from region to region, I found myself trapped in a bizarre game of "Beat the Clock" in which both time and money ran in increasingly short supply. As the game progressed, the "official" rules were constantly changing in ways that ensured profits for bureaucrats leaving us forced to use our collective mental energy to make abrupt changes in plans. As a result, the entries written in a simple coil-bound steno notebook are scant and as the reader will note, there were times when I completely lost track of the date. Nevertheless, I believe that this performance ethnography will serve to problematize the rhetorical construct of collective amnesia (Slattery & Rapp, 2003) that operates to accommodate the hegemonic ideological perspectives determining how the adoption of thousands of Romanian children is viewed.

This autobiographical account defies linear notions of time and space. Unexpectedly, I found myself immersed in a region next door to my paternal grandmother's birthplace and across the river from what was my mother-in-law's home in the Ukraine until the Nazis placed her in a work camp in Germany during the Second World War. To me, the notion of proleptic time—the sense that the past impinges on the present in ways that ground future possibilities—is not so much a postmodern pastiche as much as I feel is it the nature of existence itself. Aware of the obvious cliché, I felt as if this land was calling me. In the spirit of Brady's (2003) *The Time of Darwin's Reef,* in which this poet anthropologist manages to merge time—"twisting the familiar into strange and showing the strange to be familiar," I have attempted to portray the convergence of time and space and the intersections of Western and Eastern voices by juxtaposing diverse texts to enhance the meaning of the "present."

This performance also incorporates a number of articles in local newspapers which I read faithfully in laying plans for my trip and excerpts from transcripts from a series of internationally televised *20/20* and *Nightline* reports from the American Broadcasting Corporation on Romania's children that span more than a decade beginning with the first report in the fall of 1990. Continuing reports of the plight of "unsalvageable" children provided adoptive parents with an affirmation that in fulfilling their desire to become parents they achieved humanitarian ends. However, as Simone de Beauvoir would argue, existence is, by its very nature, ambiguous and the idea of saving one child at a time needs to be juxtaposed against the colder truth that we fueled an illicit economy and might stand accused of robbing a nation of its youth. One of three brown legal folders, all of which housed the identical

documents from Canada translated into Romanian helped recreate in the mind of this writer, the laborious and intense adoption process. In addition to these artifacts, I have included the texts from a chaotic collection of scraps of papers and backs of envelopes upon which are scribbled the names of contacts, arrangements, and messages gleaned from an instant network of support made up of strangers at home and abroad who found themselves caught in the same dream.

Voices

Narrator 1
Narrator 2
Karen: A 32-year-old teacher from Winnipeg, Canada journeying to Romania to adopt a child. Married 14 years to Peter.
Hutsul villager
The children

Setting: An assembly of educators, professors, parents, students, teachers or interested individuals in a classroom, conference, or workshop session. This readers' theatre might be performed to activate the group's response to auto-ethnography, identity formation, "messy history," children's rights, the moral and ethical considerations of foreign adoption, or media's impact on the construction of a social and global conscience.

(*Stage directions: Where the number of participants including readers and audience number fifteen or less, participants are seated in a circle. Readers are seated at regular intervals—between every three or four persons— around the circle. Where the number of participants exceeds fifteen, the readers may stand next to the audience seated in rows. In smaller groups, the parts can be re-arranged so that every participant can take a major reading role with all reading the part of the chorus in unison. Ukrainian folk music is playing in the background, a combination of vocals and bandura music.*)

The children: Tell me about where I was born and how you found me.

Narrator 1: *The land wrote itself before any*
came to chart it...
—Sheenah Pugh, Geography 2

Narrator 2: *I have my roots inside me,*
a skein of red threads
the stones have their roots inside them
like fine little ferns

Wrapped around their softness
the stones sleep hard

for centuries they have rested
under the sun.
—Tommy Olofsson, "Old Mountains Want to Turn to Sand"

Karen: You were born Feb. 19, 1991 in a hospital in Sighetu, Marmatiei, ROMANIA, but when I found you, you both lay sleeping in a two-room house in a small Ukrainian village in Romania known as Crascunesti. Earlier that morning I had met with a doctor in the region who told me that there was a woman in the village who had a large family. Already forty-three years of age and under the burden of poverty, hard work, and a poor state of health, she was having difficulty caring for her eighth and ninth children and not coping well. Neither parent was at home when I arrived. Eleven-year-old Marie, we called her "the little mother," watched over you and three-year-old Veronyca.

Narrator 1: *Beside the house, the mother lulls*
The little children for the night,
Then she, too, settles at their side.
And all is still ...
—Taras Shevchenko, Evening

Narrator 2: Meanwhile...
In 1922, some sixty kilometers away across the Tisa River, in the Ukrainian town of Delatyn, your Baba, Wasylyna Hrodzicki was born among fields of poppies and wheat.

Narrator 1: Still further north in Bukovyna, at the same time around 1898, your great grandmother, Nana was born.

Hutsul villager: *Oh, Carpathian Mountains that gave birth to me, soul and bones, you fill me with joy, you make me young, with you I am happy.*
—Paraska Plitka-Horytsvit (Suchy, 1997)

Karen: You were born among family here and at home.

The children: What brought you to Romania?

Narrator 1: *(Barbara Walters' voice speaking)*

I'm Barbara Walters and this is 20/20.
From the very beginning it was a story that moved America deeply—the wretched plight of the orphans of Romania. We followed their story for three years, returning five times to expose their desperate situation, and each time the response from Americans was overwhelming. You took all of these children into your hearts and some of then into your homes.

Karen:

April 29, 1991
Dear Friends,
Both Peter and I are overwhelmed by the continued support and concern regarding our plans to adopt in Romania and bring aid to the children left behind. Many of you wanted to know how you could help. I have recently met with a woman who has just returned from Romania and I now have a more comprehensive list of what is needed. I will be leaving June 6, 1991.
Thank you for your support.
Karen

Narrator 1:

Portage la Prairie Daily Graphic, Tuesday, March 19, 1991. **Headline: Romanian trip was like stepping back in time. A better home.**
Patty Levandosky is glad she was able to save one small child from the life she was destined to live in Romania. Levandosky and Carissa, her newly adopted baby girl arrived home in Portage la Prairie last weekend. The family is already providing Carissa with so many things she would never have experienced as an orphan.

Karen:

June 28, 1991, Friday
Winging my way through the skies. At present I am amazingly relaxed. Goodbyes were as expected, difficult for me. My thoughts are as always with Dad lately. I still feel Peter is with me, but then, we are for the most part, one. I know that in a short time I will feel the distance.

June 29?, 1991, Saturday?
I really do not know what day it is but it's 8:30 p.m. Romanian time. I'm on a thirteen-hour train ride from Bucharest to Sighetu. Just before nightfall, the train

stopped to let off passengers and I watched through the train window as a man in peasant clothing walked through a field to meet his wife. Grinning and barefoot, she had been waiting for him. She was wearing a babouchka and as she walked to greet him, her legs pushed forward the folds of her full skirt breaking through waves of tall grass. I'm writing this in the dark. The lights do not work in our berth. I am told that for a good portion of this trip the rails hug the border between Romania and the Ukraine. Just rode through a tunnel—here comes the second. No light at all. Immediate culture shock in Bucharest—one could not be prepared. Listening to walkman—"Les Mis"—to simulate the comforts of home. It's difficult to be alone with one's thoughts because they always drift home. I would give anything to have my Pete here next to me.

Liviu met us at the airport with roses. Aurel and Michael left me a note from Karen Guenette. She's left with her new baby. Liviu has been incredibly obliging. We will arrive at his home tomorrow morning.

Narrator 2: *(in a newscaster's voice) Time Magazine*, June 7, 1991.
Romania No Longer For Sale.
Few black markets are as shady as international baby trafficking. Last week in an attempt to quell a burgeoning underground trade in children, Romania announced a temporary halt to adoptions by foreigners until tighter rules are enacted.

Ever since the warehousing of 140,000 unwanted or sick children in squalid state orphanages was uncovered after the downfall of Ceausescu's regime in late 1989, Westeners have flocked to Romania to adopt thousands of abandoned babies. A growing number of unscrupulous prospective parents have reached beyond the orphanages however and scoured rural villages....

Hutsul villager: *I help my neighbor and my neighbor helps me. This is the way it has been here since ancient times.*
—Ivan Hotych (Suchy, 1997)

Narrator 1: *(as if reading a letter)*
Naroc!
Karen II,

Hi! Welcome to Romania! I hope that your flight over was uneventful and you have arrived safely. You must know that Jerry and I consider you a friend even though we have not formally met. I will think of you often during your stay here. What advice can I give you? Be patient and have faith.... Don't give up even when you feel at your lowest, that's when you must think of me and my baby. It's worth it all, the hard work and tears, to be called Mom! ...Trust your instincts—if something doesn't feel right then leave it. Ask questions. And please make an effort to understand and love the people and the country. Take care. You are in my prayers.
Karen I

Narrator 2: *(Tom Jarriel's voice)* ABC NEWS March 19, 1993. This is Romania three years after the world was put on notice that tens of thousands of children were being warehoused in substandard orphanages. Children here are still crowded into cold metal cribs. In this orphanage alone there are 800 children under the age of five, and every day more newborns arrive. Despite the outcry from the western world, despite the efforts of Americans to adopt these kids, the problem is worse than ever. There are currently more than 80,000 children still living in orphanages and medieval institutions across Romania, trapped by bureaucracy.

... The television screen intruded into Upton's comfortable life in October 1990, as he watched 20/20's report "Shame of a Nation" on the so-called "unsalvageable" children of Romania. As image after image flashed by, Upton spotted the face of one youngster who seemed to personify everything that was wrong—12-year-old Elena Rostas, with one leg grotesquely twisted over her head.

Karen: *(gently intruding on Jarriel midway in his report)* Sighetu, Marmatiei. July 1, 1991.
We met a nurse from Birmingham, England on our travels today. Heading home soon, she was here in Romania working with an international aid project funded by the BBC at the hospital for handicapped children. As it turns out, the institution is yet another dumping ground for children. She suspects that nothing is

physically or mentally wrong with most of the children when they enter through the doors but because of restraints and neglect they soon succumb to any number of maladies.

On another note, Peter phoned late this evening, had a wonderful connection. He informs me that Dad is doing well. Hope to have good news for them all soon!

Narrator 1: *(Tom Jarriel's voice resumes.)* Upton made his way to a remote corner of northwest Romania to the town of Sighetu, Marmatiei. This is the institution that propelled John Upton into action ... a cold, concrete, prison-like building where 216 children live. The kids here have been declared "unsalvageable" by the Romanian government because of physical or mental disabilities. The sign over the door is blunt—"Hospital for Irrecoverable Children."

Hutsul villager: *The day had died in the endless spaces, and it was impossible to tell whether time was passing.*
—Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (Suchy, 1997)

Karen: July 2, 1991
Up early—6:45 a.m. Waiting to use the bathroom. Water here is turned off at 9:30 p.m. and periodically throughout the day. Showers/baths limited to two per week. Praying for some good news today. Looking hopeful towards the day's events.

Narrator 2: Later that same day ...

Karen: Went to Ukrainian villages. On the advice of a local doctor we saw twin boys. Beautiful, but mother is having difficulties and considers giving them up. Michelle and I talked about postpartum depression and the fact that there isn't any medication to treat a toothache let alone providing psychiatric help to women forced through circumstance to have so many children. I'm not too sure about the father. He works the fields from dawn to dusk and Liviu will have to find him.

Hutsul villager: *For me it's important to work the land because she feeds us.*

I can't imagine any other kind of life.
—Paraska Bodaruk (Suchy, 1997)

Karen: July 7, 1991. Sunday.
Woke up to church bells ringing. Dreaming of the twins. Michelle and I talked about the children, their parents, and the prospect of court. I'll feel better once I have written consent tomorrow. Ioan and Cristian are wonderful and I can't get their little faces out of my mind. I'll tell Peter all about them when he phones.

Narrator 1: Much later on the same day...

Karen: Peter phoned while we were at the lawyer's (Marianna's). He got through around midnight. He is thrilled about the twins. He wants to phone everyone, but I told him to hold off at least until tomorrow when I get consent. Peter tells me that Dad came home today from the hospital. Mom phoned later and I got to speak with Dad and Arnold, too. It's great just to hear their voices. Thinking constantly of bringing the boys home to everyone.

Narrator 2: *Winnipeg Free Press.* May 15, 1991.
Red tape hinders Romanian adoptions.
Don and Rhonda Manuchulenko
had to climb a mountain of paperwork to adopt a child in Romania.

And the new Grosse Isle parents, who brought three-month-old Steven home earlier this month, say a new Romanian commission will make the process even tougher.... "They are still very disorganized as the commission is not working yet in all parts of Romania," Don said. ...Colleen Rodgers was among 11 Manitobans, including the Manchulenkos, who went to Romania is February.... "It was a very painful experience. The parents are glad to see their child getting a chance at a better life ... but the reasons behind it all are very sad," Rodgers said.

Karen: Monday, July 8, 1991
Up early this morning—6 a.m. Didn't get to bed until after 1 a.m. but I slept soundly. Met Ioan and Cristian's parents at the notary's office and held hands with the

boys' mother. I tried to impress them with the few words of Ukrainian I know and can pronounce. They are interested in knowing what animals we have. I hardly think that their interest extends to Nelson, our Old English Sheepdog and with the aid of Liviu we joked about it.

We have written consent from the birthparents to adopt their children. One step further ahead. We now need medical certificates and hopefully will set our court date in Baia Mara tomorrow. Slept most of the afternoon.

Hutsul villager: We are independent souls born of the mountains and isolation. Through centuries of domination by foreign lands, we have sustained our culture, from fleeing serfdom to fighting against Nazi and Soviet repression we now live scattered in villages throughout the Carpathians of southern Ukraine and northern Romania.

Karen: July 17, 1991. 7:25 a.m. Court Day!
Waited for the 7:10 train from Bucharest for a DHL envelope with a much needed document. Train 10 minutes late. Any longer and there is no chance of making it on time to Baia Mare in time for court hearing. Liviu went to sleeping car, returned with much needed paper, had it translated and notarized even put air in the tires and had a quick bite before leaving for court at 8:50 a.m. Peter had phoned to wish me luck and tell me he loves me.

Waited an eternity for our hearing. I was first up and they seemed to have already found a hitch in our declaration. Court stopped, we ran to find a public notary to make a new declaration. At first, she said that she couldn't do it today—$20US changed her mind and her attitude. Raced back to court—stood in front of the judges again. (There were five and much later I thought that the "wild goose chase" for a new declaration gave them time to eat lunch.) I understood when the birthparents were asked if they agreed to our adoption of the two boys. They consented and after that I wasn't exactly sure what was being said for the next five minutes. Michelle underwent a similar process. Michelle and I received a collective verdict

delivered in French. WE ARE PARENTS! We will have to endure the 15-day waiting period and Liviu is quite insistent that we do not take the children into our custody before that time is over.
Phoned Peter and I wished him Happy Birthday, Dad! He phoned everyone with the news.

Narrator 2: *The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. [Job 1: 21]*

Karen: July 18, 1991.
Peter phoned. Dad died last night beside his beloved Audrey. Mom said he was happy about the twins and went to bed saying, "This is indeed joyous news." I love my Dad and don't know how I will face the next few days. Mom wants me to stay put in Romania, near the children. I cannot and I have booked my flight home and will return in two weeks with Peter for the boys. I would give anything to hear my Dad sing one more time.

Narrator 1: *Winnipeg Free Press.* August 19, 1991.
Krasny (nee Peabody) Karen and Peter are pleased to announce the arrival of Jonathan Arthur Paul and Arnold Robert Cristian born Feb. 19, 1991 in Sighet, Romania. The family would like to thank the many friends and relatives whose thoughts and prayers saw us through this journey.

The Children: But what about children left behind?

Narrator 2: But what of the tens of thousands left behind? Did world outrage make any difference in their lives?

Narrator 1: *(announcing abruptly)* Dateline: June 8, 2000.
Romania's Traffic in Babies, For Some, Selling Infants Is the Family Business
Imagine selling your child to the highest bidder—and getting away with it. For many Romanian families, it's not a nightmarish fantasy, but a common strategy for survival.
In a country whose capital was once known as the "Little Paris" of Eastern Europe, the illegal sale of babies has become a multimillion-dollar enterprise, sanctioned in some cases by corrupt public officials.
After years under the heel of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu,

Romanians have struggled to get by in one of the poorest nations in Europe. The average salary is less than $1,000 a year, and an increasingly popular way to make a living is the sale of babies to brokers who make them available for international adoption.

Narrator 2: *(Ted Koppel's voice speaking)* Nightline. Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2000, 2:10 p.m. ET
They are children living in a harsh adult world. Homeless, hungry, tired, poor and unwanted, they live in subway stations and roam the streets in packs. They are violent, angry, lonely, confused and rejected. Both abusers and abused, they fight for survival in a nation that has turned from them in shame.
For Romania, like many other countries in Eastern Europe, the post-Communist transition has led to ordinary growing pains. For thousands of abandoned Romanian children, however, the pain of growing up has been extraordinary.
After outlawing abortion and contraception, former Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu prescribed that Romanian women have at least four children. Most parents dutifully complied. Yet many, especially the unemployed, lacked the means to care for these children and were forced to give them up for adoption.

Narrator 2: Ten years later, Ceausescu and his regime are gone, but the byproducts of his policy remain. Having fled state-run orphanages, a generation of Romanian children has sought freedom on the streets.

Narrator 1: In the spring of 2001 Mr. Jarriel returned to Romania to update his earlier "20/20" reports on the conditions of children detained in state-run institutions and orphanages. Ten years after, he found many of the same problems and abusive conditions, plus a thriving new market in selling babies on the black market. The five-part hour-long "20/20" report also examined the pathetic lives of older children living in rat-infested utility tunnels beneath the streets of Bucharest. The European Union is alarmed about such conditions for children and is now putting economic pressure on the Romanian government to make improvements.

References

Adopting a Romanian Child: Information for Prospective Parents. (n.d.) Online: http://www.abcnews.go.com.

Brady, I. 2003. *The Time of Darwin's Reef: Poetic Explorations in Anthropology and History.* Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press.

de Beauvoir, S. 1948. *The Ethics of Ambiguity.* (B. Frechtman, Trans.). New York: Citadel Press.

Hiebert, K. 1991. "Romanian Trip Was Like Stepping Back in Time. *Daily Graphic.*

Jarriel, Tom. (n.d.) Correspondent on 20/20. Online: http://www.wchs8.com/abc/2020/tomjarriel.shtml.

Koppel, T. 2000. "Nightline: Children Underground." Online: http://abcnews.go.com/onair/Nightline/n1000119.html.

Olofsson, T. 1992. "Old Mountains Want to Turn to Sand." *This Same Sky.* N. Nye, ed. New York: Simon & Schuster. 10.

Pugh, S. 2000. "Geography 2." *Voices: Poetry and Art From Around the World.* B. Bennett, ed. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society. 38.

"Romania's Traffic in Babies." 2001. Online: http://www.abcnews.go.com.

Schratz, M., & Walker, R. 1995. *Research as Social Change.* New York: Routledge.

Shevchenko, T. (n.d.) "Evening." Online: http://www.infoukes.com/culture/literature/shevchenko/evening.html

Slattery, P., & Rapp, D. 2003. *Ethics and the Foundations of Educations: Teaching Convictions in a Postmodern World.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Suchy, L. 1997. "Portrait of a Village." *National Geographic* 192 (5): 78-93. (NB: The quotes from Hutsul villagers are taken from this article.)

Tomlin, J. 1993. "The Orphans of Romania." Online: http://www.abcnews.go.com.

Wiedman, E. 1991, May 15. "Red Tape Hinders Romanian Adoptions." *Winnipeg Free Press.*

Photo of Annie Cullen, circa 1925. From the collection of K. Krasny.

Renee Norman

Fresh Sheets

there's the odd sense
she's still there
bent over a brisket in an oven
while i
a child visiting in the summer
ran screaming from the bees
that swarmed her raspberries

and years later i still can hear
her voice ask about my children

in our house miles away
a Holly Hobby pillowcase
a wine-colored robe
a toy chalkboard
the legacies of her attention

in the hospital she asked
for fresh sheets on her apartment beds
the last words of someone dying

i change the sheets on those beds
every summer when i go home
laid with fresh ripe raspberries
the smell of mustard basted onto brisket

Laurie Kruk

Time Coming

For Helen Kowalchuk (1904-2004)
U.S.S.R.-Canada

I
For thirty-five years,
"Time coming," Baba used to mutter. Satisfaction in
the argument-ending certainty
of a clock hand's crawl, moving her out in the company
of ancestors, saints and the pre-ordered funeral package, planting her beside husband #2, Emilyan, who fell from her pruning. Satisfaction in the way she wrung a dishcloth
or stabbed at the potatoes. Comfort in the silence she could generate, dark cloud spreading like squid's ink as we sat at her table, forking down
mountains of cabbage, beef and rice
pickled beets bleeding
onto chipped Woolco saucers. "Not gonna live forever—" Though every year we denied it—grew up/older—and she disproved it. Seventy-five, eighty, ninety and beyond. To the Nursing Home, where they only spoke English, hired illegal immigrants
to wash, dress and wheel our grandparents
to the Visitor's Room.

II
At 100, she descends to a wheelchair, without benefit of a MP's photo-opp.
Celebrations turn to accusations of her seventy-eight-year old son,
now known as her brother, and "stealing my new potatoes—thief!"
No longer Miss Clairol-orange, her feathers of white fire wildly as she fixes me,

the unexpected Wedding Guest, with an eye ever-bright for the world's worry. It's the boys, she tells us, a river of words, some Russian, then English, they need shelter, and clothes. "Police, lost, lost. Poor *Chupchik**." Who will help? Her flood won't be dammed by barriers erected feebly now, with comments on the weather, the gift of soap, the plastic tree. "Ah, the winters were terrible there", whether Kirkland Lake or her village in Belarus. "Yes, Nicky, he was going to become a teacher, but he needed new shoes. And a pair of glasses—he broke the last ones, chased home from school by that bully, Anton." I sit up, Dad sighs. "You know, I rang and rang, I was trying to phone the police, but *that woman*, she never came." A nurse passes, peers in and says isn't it nice that Grandma has visitors for Christmas. And that it's almost lunch time. Baba glares, "And the soup, I wanted to tell you, it had no flavour at all. A nothing soup."

III

Diapers called Depends are now changed by brisk brown women who know her as Elly, always talking about her washing or cooking. Cutting down her skirts and blouses for the lost boys, so that she sits in Walmart sacks, tattered and safety-pinned. Now in Russia, now in Kirkland where husband #1, Mike, finally brought her and *chupchik,* Baba rides the halls of memory, startling the blank faces she meets. In a lost conversation with her "brother" who remembers her son's birth, at 21, in a shed beside the wheatfield she was scything. Two women watching. "I was so thin, so young. Had no milk. Had to give him to the woman beside me, her baby died. Anton."
Stopping before the photos of her 100th birthday party, she jabs a finger and says "See, my mother—like monkey—she lived too long, too long—"

IV

As we listen, her second granddaughter, 39, waits in hospital for the pains, the driving division that will turn her world inside out, begun again. Her husband holding her hand, rubbing her back, drinking her fear but ready with the camera and the rose in plastic. The ghost that haunted her nine-month house of flesh will put his feet down, sensing earth, now hidden under the first snow. Claim flesh's dear indignities, and a name. The purple wail that ends with him crushed
to her filling breast
an echo
of the hundred years of his great-grandmother's losing, gaining and worrying.
The mother, the timekeeper. Like the puppy trick:
a hot water bottle and clock, wrapped in flannel,
tucked beside the whimpering whelp
whose only comfort is breathing in the beats
of mother time.

* "child" (Russian)

Book Reviews

The Raging Grannies: Wild Hats, Cheeky Songs and Witty Actions for a Better World

Carole Roy
Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2004

Reviewed by M. Louise Ripley

As a crone, and the daughter of a lively, ninety-year-old crone, I approached the task of reviewing *The Raging Grannies* with particular relish, and anticipated the need to announce my bias in favour of Carole Roy's book. But there is no need for caution or apology. *The Raging Grannies* is a great book!

Roy begins with a history of the Raging Grannies, a group of women that originated in Victoria, British Columbia in 1987. "Dressed as old-fashioned conservative proper little old ladies," presented an Un-Valentine on Valentine's Day to the then local Member of Parliament, Chair of the Defence Committee hearing briefs on the issue of uranium mining. The women brought a laundry basketful of their own briefs—a clothesline full of women's underwear, in fact—into the British Columbia Legislature building to register their protest against the Chair's "lack of action and commitment on nuclear issues." They thought it would be a one-time protest, but something about the Grannies caught on in the minds of those who care about the environment and the future of the human race. The idea of dressing up in silly clothes, crazy hats, and parodying the stereotype of grandmothers (the Raging Grannies later staged a knit-in for peace) to convey a point proved enormously appealing to numbers

of women. The successful ploy enabled the Grannies to be heard—when less theatrical protests would have been squelched and when anyone but a grandmother might have been ill-treated. Needless to say, humour is an important tool in the Grannies' tool-kit, and they profit from the unwillingness of police, soldiers, or politicians to be seen harming "old women."

Roy follows the history of the Grannies as they grew into a Canadian institution of protest, with "branches" located across Canada, the United States, Greece, and Australia. The Grannies are not easily described. In fact, they range in age from the nineties and to younger grannies-at-heart who are in their twenties and thirties. "A Granny isn't a grandmother; a Granny is a frame of mind. Attitude!" says Granny Betsy Carr of Toronto. The Grannies are, in Roy's own words, "cultural activists who use humour to highlight issues rather than to deny, dismiss, or pacify situations." They use surprise and their own willingness to "make fools of themselves" to achieve awareness and empowerment.

The story of the Grannies, told in nine chapters, is interspersed with one-page biographies of many of the women interviewed for the book, dozens of quotes directly from the Grannies themselves, new Raging Granny words to familiar tunes, and numerous pictures. The Grannies protest against a variety of issues, including nuclear weapons, war, government cuts in welfare, spraying of poisons, genetic engineering, sweatshops, the closure of bank branches and libraries, and arming outer space. They also speak out in favour of many causes: peace, care for the environment, AIDS, strikes for better working conditions, drag queens, affordable housing, gay rights, health care, better treatment of the homeless, power and visibility for older women, and giving "credence to protests of the young." I shared the shock that many of the Grannies expressed when they learned what kinds of issues truly frighten those in power. As one Granny put it, "when I realized that it's the very things that we stand for that seem to threaten people in authority so deeply, it was a shock, really it was a shock."

My favourite chapter, "Raging Grannies in the Wide Web of Life," brings together the various themes of the book, and its title is reminiscent of the seventh principle of the Unitarian Universalist denomination, of which several Grannies are members. It was especially delightful to discover that I personally knew more than one individual Granny, including one who is pictured in Roy's book.

Based on an academic thesis, Roy's book does a commendable job of including illustrative and clarifying references to other scholarly work in the field, in particular the work of Shelagh Wilkinson. At the same time, it is a highly readable text. The underlying thread of so many of the Grannies' stories—of finding their voices when dressing up in funny clothes and hats—is reminiscent of a major thrust of a recent thesis on crones by Gail McCabe: that after menopause, when they are no longer "worth" categorizing by men as either future wives or potential bearers of children, many women find them-

selves rediscovering the freedom of movement, thought, and action they knew as young girls. Roy's wonderful, warm, witty, outrageous, committed, caring Grannies show evidence of this same freedom.

If I can offer one criticism of this book it is that there is frequent repetition of themes across chapters. Repeatedly, readers learn about the World Trade Organization protests and the importance of "attitude," for example. But this fault does not detract from the sheer enjoyment of reading the book and getting to know the Grannies who inspire readers to get up from their armchairs and do something to save the world. As Carole Roy states near the close of *The Raging Grannies*: "To look at older women activists is an opportunity to contribute to scholarship on women's organizing and social movements as well as offer recognition and learn from a group of women who have actively and publicly engaged with the issues of their time." In this, *The Raging Grannies* succeeds admirably.

Intentional Grandparenting: A Boomer's Guide

Peggy Edwards and Mary Jane Sterne
Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2005

Reviewed by Susan Swanson

Being a grandparent is one of the most fulfilling stages in the life course. However, as Peggy Edwards and Mary Jane Sterne point out in this informative and entertaining book, grandparenting may be more complex in the twenty-first century than it was for previous generations. There have been many changes in marriage and parenting trends, including later age at marriage, increases in cohabitation, same sex unions, interracial and bicultural marriages, as well as divorce. Families are often mobile and live far distances apart. An ageing population means that grandparents are living longer and are often members of the "sandwich" or "club sandwich" generation, i.e. people who have frail older parents, adult children, and grandchildren – all with different needs and expectations.

Based on solid evidence from experts, combined with insightful and often poignant anecdotes from grandparents, parents, and grandchildren, *Intentional Grandparenting* provides readers with ten child-centred principles for effective grandparenting. At the heart of the book is the concept of being intentional—planning ahead and taking deliberate action to be the kind of grandparent one wants to be. Ten principles cover modern challenges such as step-grandparenting, distance grandparenting, and accepting and respecting one's adult children in

their role as parents. Each chapter provides "real-life" examples of how individuals have put these principles into practice. The stories are inspirational and often humorous, and the quotes from grandchildren will make readers laugh out loud.

While intended for grandparents, this book will also be relevant to others, such as aunts and uncles, who play significant roles in children's lives. *Intentional Grandparenting* is a must read for all grandparents who want to enrich their relationships with both their grandchildren and adult children.

Communication Among Grandmothers, Mothers, and Adult Daughters

Michelle Miller-Day
Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004

Reviewed by Ruth Nemzoff

Congratulations to Michelle Miller-Day for writing a readable academic study, *Communication Among Grandmothers, Mothers, and Adult Daughters.* Miller-Day's book begins with an excellent review of the limited literature on mother-adult child relationships across the generations, and goes on to present a detailed study of three generations of several different families living in one town. Her qualitative analysis focuses on how intergenerational relationships influence individual outcomes.

Miller-Day is to be lauded for revealing that it is the complexity of relationships that leads to dependency. The families in which there are many problems, such as anorexia, suicidal trends, and depression, tend to be "enmeshed" families where the younger women are of lower status in the familial hierarchy and depend on the older women for decision-making. The lower-status women often repress their own opinions and instincts in deference to the older women's judgments and beliefs. In contrast, in "embedded" families each generation is encouraged to develop and express its own opinions, which encourages a more open atmosphere.

This book will appeal to those studying relationships between adult kin. This is also a useful book for practitioners and family therapists who want to help family members communicate through respectful negotiation.

Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart

Andrea O'Reilly
New York: State University of New York Press, 2004

Reviewed by Dolana Mogadime

Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart begins with Andrea O'Reilly's description of her quest to understand the meaning of the ancient properties of black women and motherhood as a site of empowerment. As a white woman, academic, and mother, O'Reilly navigates the worlds of white feminists and black feminists in relation to motherhood and mothering. For the author, the Anglo-American feminist view of motherhood as a site of patriarchal oppression is problematic, and she goes to great lengths to chart the limitations embedded in western notions of motherhood. In fact, O'Reilly's book is built on counter narrative, and her critical position opens onto alternative and empowering African American conceptualizations of mothering.

O'Reilly's intent "is to read Morrison as a maternal theorist" (xi) and she provides refreshing insight into the maternal theme as a central aspect of Morrison's fiction. Throughout her book, O'Reilly muses over Morrison's many interviews and articles in which she publicly articulates the views of black womanhood and motherhood that she embeds in her fiction. She engages Morrison's own voice and surmises: "In her reflections on motherhood, both inside and outside her fiction, Morrison articulates a fully developed theory of African American mothering that is central to her larger political and philosophical stance on black womanhood. Building upon black women's experiences of, and perspectives on, motherhood, Morrison develops a view of black motherhood that is, in terms of both maternal identity and role, radically different than the motherhood practiced and prescribed in the dominant culture" (1).

In her navigation between two worlds, O'Reilly offers a creative understanding of the work of mothering theorists and the notion of maternal practice and explores connections between Anglo-American and black feminism. She analyzes intersections between Sara Ruddick's model of maternal practice and Patricia Hill Collins's standpoint theory of black mothering to consider ways in which Toni Morrison "defines motherwork as a political enterprise that assumes as its central aim the empowerment of children" (1).

O'Reilly artfully extends Ruddick's notion of maternal practice. While she foregrounds Ruddick's model of motherwork as characterized by three demands – preservation, growth, and social acceptance – she reformulates and extends this model by suggesting that Morrison's desire to train children to

become socially acceptable includes the African American custom of cultural bearing, "raising children in accordance with the values, beliefs, and customs of traditional African American culture and in particular the values of the funk and ancient proprieties. In each of these [maternal] tasks—preservation, nurturance, cultural bearing—Morrison is concerned with protecting children from the hurts of a racist and, for daughters, sexist culture, and with teaching children how to protect themselves so they may be empowered to survive and resist the racist and patriarchal culture in which they live and develop a strong and authentic identity as a black person" (29).

Black feminists like myself, who study racial differences between black and white communities and who argue for the political importance of mothering in teaching, are drawn to O'Reilly's thesis that mothering is a potential site of empowerment. O'Reilly boldly reconfigures hegemonic western notions of motherhood while maintaining dialogues across cultural differences. She disrupts the dominant view of motherhood and values the ancient properties of black womanhood and mothering as a site for social and political emancipation. The urgency and relevance of this maternal theoretical approach is articulated best by O'Reilly: "Morrison in her rendition of mothering as a political and public enterprise, emerges as a social commentator and political theorist who radically, through her maternal philosophy, reworks, rethinks and reconfigures the concerns and strategies of African American, and in particular black women's emancipation in America" (xi).

Women's Stories of Divorce at Childbirth: When the Baby Rocks the Cradle

Hilary Hoge
Binghamton: Haworth Clinical Practice Press, 2002

Reviewed by Sandra Jarvie

Hilary Hoge has written a comprehensive analysis of divorce at childbirth. Her book links clinical case studies, which record the lived experiences of women who divorce at childbirth, with a wide variety of research to support her analysis of the impact of divorce on couples, both as individuals and as parents. Hoge explores the emotional and psychological adjustments to pregnancy and birth that contribute to divorce and the ensuing consequences, both short- and long-term, for parents and children. In a concise manner, Hoge bridges research and theory with interpretation and insight.

Hoge divides her book into three parts. Part one explores the causes of

divorce and focuses on the multiple challenges of pregnancy. The transition to parenthood and the transformation of women and men as they either accept or reject parenthood is experienced inwardly and outwardly. Hoge shows that a crisis can occur when a couple cannot adapt as a family of three, and the result is divorce at childbirth.

Part two explores the effects of divorce at childbirth. Hoge's insight and analysis of research on the emotional consequences of divorce are informative. The research on attachment theory and trauma versus grief is particularly insightful in relationship to divorce. The adverse economic realities for divorced mothers and their children are stark and distressing. Two chapters in this section are devoted to the effects of divorce on older children and the effects of divorce on infants. Part three concludes by reporting the results of research undertaken in support of Hoge's study. *Women's Stories of Divorce at Childbirth* will be an invaluable resource for professionals and people who have experienced divorce.

Unbecoming Mothers: The Social Production of Maternal Absence

Diana Gustafson, ed.
New York: Haworth Press, 2005

Reviewed by Amy Mullin

Unbecoming Mothers: The Social Production of Maternal Absence is an important contribution to feminist scholarship on mothering. This collection of essays, edited by Diana Gustafson, examines non-residential mothering, specifically the mothering experiences and/or practices of women who do not live with their children, and who therefore violate powerful assumptions about the place of mothers in their children's lives. The title of the book refers simultaneously to the process of becoming other than the resident and fully absorbed mothers of western ideology, and to the "unbecoming" nature of this very role.

This interdisciplinary collection includes contributions written by academics from a diverse array of fields (nursing, social work, history, anthropology, and the performing arts). The volume includes essays written by mothers who are living apart from their children, interviews, narratives, and, to a lesser degree, the voices of children who have grown up apart from their mothers. One poem is also included.

The eleven essays share assumptions about the need to analyze the function of gender (among other variables) in parenting; the role of social, political, and economic forces in shaping the diverse experiences of mothers and children;

and the impact of unrealistic western ideals about "good mothers" on mothers and children alike. Taken together, the essays investigate a number of reasons why women live apart from their biological children, including health problems, the intervention of social agencies, missionary zeal, women's competing needs, and difficult life circumstances. Most of the mothers studied are contemporary women, but two fascinating essays (one on seventeenth-century Quaker mothers and another on early twentieth-century Canadian mothers), consider two very different contexts in which women live apart from their children.

The essays point to the burden placed on both women and their children by the expectation that mothers and fathers will have different kinds of relationships with their children, and that a child's closest relationship will always be with his or her mother. As a result, children who are raised by other adults, but who have ongoing contact with their nonresidential mothers, feel stigmatized. Even when their mothers have made careful arrangements for their care and continue to be in contact with them, a gap exists between their experiences and ideals for relationships between mothers and children. At the same time, mothers often face harsh social sanctions and disapproval from acquaintances, as well as from those closest to them.

Many of the essays contest the sharp distinction between "good" and "bad" mothers, which typically operates in the societies studied in this book (Australia, Britain, Canada, and the United States). They gesture toward a balanced rethinking of what it means to be a "good mother." Further theorizing about non-residential mothering is necessary, and any such work would do well to start with the rich theoretical and experiential material presented in Gustafson's collection.

In Search of Shelter: Subjectivity and Spaces of Loss in the Fiction of Paule Constant

Margot Miller
Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003

Reviewed by Marla H. Kohlman

Margot Miller's avowed purpose in writing *In Search of Shelter* is to "bring critical attention in the English-speaking world to the work of Paule Constant, an award winning and decidedly disturbing author" (9). Constant's collected works, Miller argues, are particularly important to scholars of postcolonial studies because they give voice to the complicity and struggle located in interpersonal relationships, and in the historical effects of having been either

colonizer or colonized at the macro-level of national identity.

Miller utilizes psychological theory to explain the importance to Constant of seeking safety and shelter within relationships governed by oppression and submission. As she argues, "Constant at once insists on the value of the female and of female characters as representations of the struggle for human connection" (132). Constant's work exemplifies the belief that writing is at once a volitional act and one that bears the mark of institutional influence. In challenging discourse and giving voice to the oppressed, writing has the subversive potential of undermining current ideological narratives. But when it is regulated by institutions that often are organized systems of oppression, writing can also be repressive.

Miller's discussion draws on the work of Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. She exposes the agency of women who face dilemmas that either exacerbate their victimization or allow them to extricate themselves from their submissive positions. Miller argues, in fact, that "[l]ike many contemporary French and Francophone writers who expose violent situations both to denounce them and to reclaim their voice/existence, Constant creates in her fictional world a profound sense of the psychological exile matched by its geographical counterpart that her characters experience" (153). Time and again, Constant's fictional characters are required to suffer devastating losses because of the choices they make within their constrained circumstances, even as they hope to find fulfillment in relationships with others. Miller characterizes this dilemma as "the fundamental problem of individual responsibility in the face of oppression" (148). In fact, much of Miller's work is devoted to plot summary in support of her argument that "Constant's novels show us that because of these 'choices' the role of individual and social responsibility in personal loss transcends such specific political questions as race, gender, religion, or ethnicity" (151). When she provides painstaking plot summaries of Constant's fictional texts, however, Miller becomes pedantic.

Written from a feminist perspective, *In Search of Shelter* is an important contribution to postcolonial studies. Miller recognizes that Constant's depiction of fictional characters is not feminist; she argues instead that Constant's gendered institutions, shaped by cultural contexts, both grant and deny agency to individuals. Miller's book is particularly valuable for its explication of Constant's narratives that concern themselves with the representation of male and female characters who seek shelter in the very relationships that make them complicit in their own oppression.

Making Women Pay: The Hidden Cost of Fetal Rights

Rachel Roth
Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000

Reviewed by Jennifer Musial

Making Women Pay: The Hidden Cost of Fetal Rights is a thoroughly documented book that illustrates how women disproportionately pay the price of reproduction. Roth uses a critical legal studies approach to examine the law, government, and public policy between 1973 and 1992 in post-*Roe v. Wade* United States. Roth looks specifically at three aspects associated with fetal rights: "work, medical care settings," and "government regulation of women's consumption of drugs and alcohol" (2). Roth's goal in *Making Women Pay* is to "analyze fetal rights policies and practices on their own terms and to analyze their impact on women, the fetuses they may bear, and prospects for gender equality in the United States" (13). Throughout her text, she asserts that work on reproductive rights tends to ignore the gender discrimination and sexism that lie at the heart of reproductive issues.

Making Women Pay is comprehensive and thoughtfully organized. Following a literature review in chapter two, Roth examines how workplaces and courts use the discourse of fetal rights to discriminate against women. Whether they are pregnant or not, women are arbitrarily barred from certain types of employment deemed harmful. When women cannot be prohibited from working, they are subject to guilt and blame for not sufficiently protecting their fetuses. Ultimately, courts and companies would rather condemn women than put forth efforts to make workplaces safe. Roth then looks at medical interventions into pregnancy: forced caesarians, blood transfusions, and detainment, for example. She explains that actual contestation is not a maternal-fetal conflict but a conflict between women and the medical establishment and/or the state. Next, Roth explores how the law has penalized women when they consume drugs and/or alcohol during pregnancy. In each chapter, Roth points out the inconsistency in maternal-fetal health rhetoric.

In advocating equality, *Making Women Pay* presents a largely liberal feminist argument. While Roth includes analysis of race and class, these are largely underdeveloped issues in her text. Also missing from Roth's study is a discussion of women's agency. Only in her conclusion does she comment that some women have used fetal rights legislation to their advantage, as in cases involving domestic violence. In other books this emphasis might locate women as victims, but Roth's focus on the structural constraints imposed on women's reproductive freedom avoids this pitfall.

As Roth points out, the reproductive costs, both physical and emotional, that women pay are enormous. Moreover, women are led to mistrust the medical and legal establishments. In fact, there is no direct cost-benefit relationship in terms of the cost to a woman and the benefit to her fetus. Roth returns to the idea that what women lose in the reproductive equation is gained by (male) doctors and lawmakers rather than fetuses.

Perhaps most intriguing in *Making Women Pay* is the concept of woman's citizenship that, Roth argues, is constrained by fetal rights. According to Roth, a woman's rights to bodily integrity, employment, due process, and religious practice are fundamental issues of citizenship. This book would work well in political science and law courses, as well as women's studies courses.

Crooked Smile: One Family's Journey Toward Healing

Lainie Cohen
Toronto: ECW Press, 2003

Reviewed by Christine Peets

Daniel Cohen was seventeen in August 1993 when he was involved in a car accident that left him with a brain injury. This book chronicles the struggle of Daniel and his family to deal with his trauma. Daniel's mother, Lainie Cohen, started writing *Crooked Smile* five years after her son's accident. It took another five years to complete and publish her work.

Following his accident, Daniel was comatose for weeks and faced seemingly insurmountable odds. His injury affected his ability to talk, read, and move; his basic self-care functions had to be relearned. Health, educational, and social work professionals did not give the family much hope. The Cohens were told that their son would have to be institutionalized, but they refused to believe that Daniel would not improve. They never gave up and were willing to do, as Cohen writes, "whatever it takes to help our son." They carried out or supervised every aspect of Daniel's physical and mental care, well supported by family, friends, and health-care professionals.

This exhaustive care took its toll on the family, however. The Cohens' younger son, Jonathan, started using marijuana. Their daughter, Alyssa, suffered joint pain that left her in a wheelchair for a time. While the point is made that Daniel's trauma involved the whole family, Cohen does not make the connection strongly enough between what was going on with Daniel and how

it affected her other children. The narrative flow is not always smooth, as Cohen switches from present to past tense. Is the author telling her story or is she trying to have readers relive it with her?

Throughout the story of Daniel's recovery, we learn about the Cohens: who they were and who they are today. Following the accident, "[w]e were," Cohen writes, "like Humpty Dumpty, who never could be put back together again." One of her biggest triumphs comes in a small moment when, after having been away from the family for a while, she realizes that she has missed Daniel, "not the way he was, but the way he is now." Cohen had finally achieved the acceptance that had once eluded her.

In the end, narrative lapses do not matter because Cohen's story is so powerful. The unconditional love, the strength gained from the support of family and friends, and the determination shown by and for Daniel comes through vividly. This is a healing book, not just for Lainie Cohen and her family, but for the reader as well. When Daniel reacquires his full smile, the reader learns what is possible when a family never gives up.

Lainie Cohen is an educator and psychological consultant. At the time of her son's accident, she had some background in dealing with individuals with special needs but she was forced to learn more than she likely ever wanted to know about brain injuries. Her work will be especially helpful to anyone living with or teaching a brain-injured individual. In a further effort to help physicians and families deal with the trauma that accompanies brain injury, Cohen has gone on to write and speak about her family's journey. *Crooked Smile,* Cohen's first book, serves an important personal and public purpose.

Contributor Notes

Trela Anderson recently received an Assistant Professor of English position at Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, North Carolina. She obtained her Ph.D. in English in May 2004 at The University of Louisiana, Lafayette. Her writing and research interests include creative nonfiction, most specifically memoir, African American literature and African American folklore. Currently, she is seeking to publish her memoir, *The Cinderella Stories: Lessons I Learned From my Grandmother, A Spiritual Memoir,* which tells of herrelationship with my maternal grandmother Cinderella during her teenaged years.

Phyllis Antwi, MD, MPH, is a Public Health Physician and Professor of Public Health, School of Public Health, University of Ghana-Legon, Accra, Ghana, W. Africa.

Nana Araba Apt, MSW, Ph.D., is a Professor and Director of the Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS) as well as Chair of the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana-Legon, Accra, Ghana, W. Africa.

Ian Richard Barnett is a recent graduate of Carleton University's School of Architecture. He is currently working in the field of urban renewal and heritage conservation.

Patricia Bell-Scott is Professor of Child and Family Development & Women's Studies and an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the University of Georgia in Athens. She was founding co-editor of *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* and principal editor of the award-winning anthology, *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters.* She is co-editor of the first text

in Black women's studies, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks are Men: But Some of Us Are Brave*, as well as editor of *Life Notes: Personal Writings by Contemporary Black Women,* and *Flat-footed Truths: Telling Black Women's Lives.* She specializes as a teacher and writer in Black women's narratives.

Mary Kay Blakely is an Associate Professor at the Missouri School of Journalism. She is the author of three books, including *Wake Me When It's Over—A Journey to the Edge and Back* (Times Books/Random House) and *American Mom—Motherhood, Politics and Humble Pie* (Algonquin/Pocket Books), and her essays have been collected in numerous anthologies. A Hers columnist for the *New York Times* and currently a contributing editor to *Ms.* and the *Los Angeles Times* magazine, she has published essays and articles about social issues in *Mother Jones, Life, Working Woman, McCalls, Redbook, Psychology Today, Self, the Chicago Tribune, the New York Times Book Review* and numerous other national publications. Her work has been translated and published in Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, England and Italy. She now teaches Advanced Writing at the University of Missouri and is the director of the New York Summer Journalism Program at the New School University.

Marguerite Guzman Bouvard is a Resident Scholar at Brandeis University's Women's Studies Research Center. She is the author of 14 books including *Revolutionizing Motherhood; The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Women Reshaping Human Rights; How Extraordinary Women Are Changing the World*, as well as five books and two chapbooks of poetry. She has had a number of residencies at the Leighton Artist Colony, the Banff Centre for the Performing Arts.

Paula J. Caplan, Ph.D., is the author of *THE NEW Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship* and eight other books. She is a Visiting Scholar at the Pembroke Center for Research and Teaching on Women at Brown University and is former Professor of Applied Psychology and Head of the Centre for Women's Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She is also a playwright, actor, and director, and her play, CALL ME CRAZY, includes a monologue delivered by "Amalia Freud" (Freud's mother) that is partly about mother-blame and being a mother. She lectures and teaches workshops about mothers and daughters, as well as other subjects, and has helped organized social and political action about various matters, including sexism in psychiatric diagnosis and in the use of psychotropic drugs. Her most recent work on the latter is addressed in part in her recent article in the *National Women's Health Network's "Network News."*

Patrice DiQuinzio is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Women's Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, USA. She is the author of *The Impossibility of Motherhood: Feminism, Individualism, and the Problem of Mothering* (Routledge, 1999) and is co-editor with Iris Marion

Young of *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy* (Indiana University Press, 1997). Her articles on philosophical problems in theorizing motherhood and on motherhood as a model for citizenship have appeared in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* and *Women and Politics*. She is currently at work on a project analyzing contemporary instances of U.S. women's civic engagement conducted under the sign of motherhood, such as the Million Mom March.

Richard L. Douglass, MPH, Ph.D., is a Professor in Health Administration, College of Health and Human Services, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan, USA. 2001-2002: Fulbright Fellow, U.S. Department of State, School of Public Health, University of Ghana, Legon.

Rishma Dunlop is a poet, fiction writer and playwright. She is the author of three books of poetry: *The Body of My Garden* (2000), *Reading Like a Girl* (2004) and *Metropolis* (in press 2005). She has also published two poetry chapbooks: *Boundary Bay* (2000) and *The Blue Hour* (2004), a collaboration with painter Suzanne Northcott. She is co-editor, with Priscila Uppal, of *Red Silk: An Anthology of South Asian Canadian Women Poets* (2004). Her radio play *The Raj Kumari's' Lullaby*, commissioned by CBC Radio in 2004, was aired on CBC in February 2005 and published in the anthology *Where is Here? The Drama of Immigration*. Rishma Dunlop was the recipient of the Emily Dickinson Award for poetry in 2003 and she was a finalist for the CBC/Canada Council Award for Poetry in 1998. Dunlop is an Associate Professor of Literary Studies and Fine Arts in the Faculty of Education and Department of Women's Studies at York University, Toronto, Canada. She is the mother of two daughters, Cara and Rachel.

Miriam Edelson is a social activist, mother and writer living in Toronto. Her creative non-fiction and commentaries have appeared in *The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star*, CBC Radio, *This Magazine* as well as other periodicals. Born in New York, Edelson spent her teens in Toronto and completed graduate studies in political science at Carleton University. She is fluent in French and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in sociology and bio-ethics part-time at the University of Toronto. Her particular area of interest is social policy regarding the care of medically-fragile infants. Edelson has worked in the trade union movement since 1980, specializing in communications and human rights issues. She lives in Toronto with her daughter Emma.

Miriam Johnson is a retired Professor of Sociology at the University of Oregon whose teaching and writing has been focused on gender and the family throughout her career. She is the author of a book entitled *Strong Mothers, Weak Wives* and co-author with Jean Stockard of a text on sex and gender. She and her husband of many years live in Oregon where they both taught sociology. They have two children, one married and one single. Currently she is affiliated

with the Council on Contemporary Families, which attempts to get accurate research information out about the many different kinds of contemporary families besides the so called "ideal" nuclear family that now exist in the U.S. and Canada

Susan Loudermilk Garza is Associate Professor of English at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi where she teaches technical and professional writing and composition theory and pedagogy. She has published articles on teaching and technology and is currently writing a textbook on technical and professional writing.

Priscilla A. Gibson is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota. She is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Work (LICSW), has over 25 years of direct social work practice experience, and teaches social work direct practice courses. Her research interests include African American grandmothers and other older caregivers in kinship care arrangements, qualitative research methods; middle-class African American adolescents and their families; and adoption.

Marion Gold: Transformed through the imposition of societal roles as mother, grandmother, great grandmother, I now revel in the freedom of cronehood and hagdom. Transformed through my life long pursuit of education, I continue to read, write, and sometimes philosophize about that process from my perch on the periphery of academe.

Sandra Jarvie is an adoption reform activist, with concern for the protection of mothers and their babies in adoption practice, process and law, and supports family preservation. She is a writer, researcher and, presently, the Alberta representative for and Vice President of the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers.

Robbie Pfeufer Kahn is associate professor of sociology at the University of Vermont. Her book *Bearing Meaning: The Language of Birth* won the 1977 Jesse Bernard Award of the American Sociological Association. She has two grandchildren, Aziz 4 and Aya 20mo. who live in London.

Marla H. Kohlman is Associate Professor of Sociology at Kenyon College. Her current research areas are the race, class, and gender dynamics of sexual harassment and motherhood as part of the work and family balance.

Karen Krasny is an assistant professor at York University in the Faculty of Education. A longtime educator, she has worked as a teacher and curriculum coordinator for public schools and served as Manitoba's Provincial Language Arts Specialist. Currently, Karen is writing a book titled *Gender and Literacy:*

A Handbook for Parents and Educators to be published by Greenwood Press.

Katrin Kriz, who earned a Ph.D. degree in Sociology at Brandeis University, works as a Projects Coordinator in the Multidisciplinary Program in Inequality & Social Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Katrin and her husband Uday have a nine month-old daughter, Neeva. While her parents are at work, Neeva is in the care of her "second moms."

Laurie Kruk is an Associate Professor, English Studies, Nipissing University in North Bay and the mother of two daughters, Elena (seven) and Bobbie-Ann, (four). She continues to combine creative writing with her research on the short story (*The Voice is the Story: Conversations with Canadian Writers of Short Fiction*). In November 2005, she will be presenting a paper on Thomas King, Olive Senior, Alistair MacLeod and Guy Vanderhaeghe at the international "Orality in Short Fiction" Conference, held in Angers, France.

Brenda F. McGadney-Douglass is an Associate Professor of Social Work at The University of Toledo. She earned B.A. and MSW degrees from The University of Michigan and doctorate at The University of Chicago. Dr. McGadney-Douglass has published in numerous scholarly journals, is a speaker at National and International conferences, and maintains field studies in informal and formal supports of family caregivers of elders, and indigenous child survival and ethnic conflict in Ghana.

Carolyn Mitchell, professor of English and Director of women's studies, earned her Ph.D. from Boston College, her master's from Michigan State University and her bachelor's from Hunter College. The author of a number of books and articles, her interests include nineteenth and twentieth century American literature, African American literature, women's literature, Victorian fiction, women's studies, theory and criticism.

Dolana Mogadime is an assistant professor in the Graduate and Undergraduate Faculty of Education at Brock University. Dolana's research interests and dedication to her South African roots remain longstanding—her research extends the growing field of literature on Black women's contribution to the education of children in Africa and the African Diaspora and has been published in various feminist journals such as: *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme, Resources for Feminist Research* and the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering.* Dolana is currently working in collaboration with Goodie on the book *Memory as Healing: Recreating Self in Social and Political History During the Post-Apartheid Era.*

Kim A. Morrison is a Ph.D. candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Her primary research interest is friendship rela-

tionships, particularly the study of friendships in different social contexts and friendship's potential for social change. Her Women's and Gender Studies MA thesis about the grandmothers' friendships was a Thesis Award winner.

Amy Mullin is a philosophy professor at the University of Toronto. She is the mother of three children and has recently published *Reconceiving Pregnancy and Childcare: Ethics, Experience and Reproductive Labor* (Cambridge, 2005).

Jennifer Musial is a Ph.D. student in Women's Studies at York University. Her research focuses on corporeality and the pregnant body. It has been published in ARM's 5.1 journal and *Not Just Any Dress: Explorations of Dress, Identity, and the Body.* She has also appeared on *Planet Parent* on TV Ontario.

Ruth Nemzoff is an adjunct associate professor at Bentley College and a Resident Scholar at Brandeis University's Women's Studies Research Center. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Barnard College, a Master's degree from Columbia University and a Doctorate in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University.

Ruby K. Newman is Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities at Atkinson College, School of Arts and Letters, York University. She teaches courses in Women's Studies, Humanities and Jewish Studies. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research interests include oral narratives of Ethiopian-Jewish women in Israel. She is the mother of two sons and a daughter and the proud grandmother of a grandson.

Gisela Norat is an Associate Professor of Spanish at Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, Georgia where teaches Latina and Latin American women's literature in the Spanish and Women's Studies Programs. She is author of *Marginalities: Diamela Eltit and the Subversion of Mainstream Literature in Chile* (University of Delaware Press, 2002) and various journal articles with a feminist focus. Research interests include Hispanic women in contemporary fiction and their self-portrayal in life writing.

Renee Norman, Ph.D., is a poet, writer, and teacher who lives in Coquitlam, BC. Her poetry has been published in various academic and literary journals. Recently, her poetry was featured in an anthology of Canadian women poets, *The Missing Line*, published by Inanna Publications. A volume of poetry, *True Confessions*, is also forthcoming with Inanna Publications.

Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D. , is an Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University where she teaches a course on motherhood (the first course on motherhood in Canada; now taught to more than 200 students a year

as a Distance Education course), and the Introduction to Women's Studies course. She is co-editor/editor of seven books on motherhood: *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns* (Second Story Press, 1998), *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity and the Struggle to Raise our Sons* (Routledge Press 2001), *From Motherhood to Mothering: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (SUNY, 2004), *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering* (Women's Press, 2004), and *Mother Matters: Mothering as Discourse and Practice* (ARM Press, 2004) and author of *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* (SUNY, 2004). She is currently at work on three edited books: *Feminist Mothering, Motherhood: Power and Oppression* and *Women's Voices Across the Third Wave* and writing *Reconceiving Maternity.* O'Reilly is founding president of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM), the first feminist association on the topic of mothering-motherhood with more than 500 members worldwide; and is founder and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering.* In 1998 she was the recipient of the university wide "Teacher of the Year" award at York University. As well she had been interviewed widely on this topic including appearances on "More to Life," "Planet Parent," "Canadian Living Television," "Sex TV," "Next.New.Now," CBC radio and *Time Magazine.* Andrea and her common-law spouse of 21 years are the parents of a 19-year old son and two daughters, ages 14 and 17.

Ruth Panofsky is Book Review Editor of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* and Associate Professor of English at Ryerson University. Her most recent book, *"The Force of Vocation": The Literary Career of Adele Wiseman*, is forthcoming with University of Manitoba Press. She is also the author of *Lifeline*, a volume of poetry.

Serena Patterson is a Clinical Psychologist and Instructor of Women's Studies at North Island College in Courtenay, British Columbia. She is a lesbian activist and grandmother wannabe.

Christine Peets is a mother, freelance writer and instructor. Her first book, *With Humour and Hope: Learning From Our Depression and Alcoholism* was published in 2001 (Trafford). Christine's work has been published in academic journals, trade publications, consumer magazines and newspapers. She is busy getting ready for another term teaching her writing courses in the Continuing Education departments at her local community colleges. Details about Christine's work are available on her website: www.CaptionsCommunications.ca

Rebecca Raby is a sociologist and an assistant professor in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Her work focuses on constructions of adolescence, life courses, conceptualizations of youth resistance and

young people's engagement with school rules. Her relationship with her grandmother has been very important to her – both now and when she was a teenager.

M. Louise Ripley is an Associate Professor of Marketing, Women's Studies, and in Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto. With the support of her spouse of 23 years, she managed to raise a wonderful son while working full-time at York and pursuing full-time doctoral studies at the University of Toronto.

Carole Roy is currently a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellow in Canadian Studies at Trent University. She holds a MA in Women's Studies (York University) and a Ph.D. in Adult Education (University of Toronto). She is the author of *The Raging Grannies: Wild Hats, Cheeky Songs, and Witty Actions for a Better World,* published by Black Rose Books (2004) and selected for the Amelia Bloomer Award by the Feminist Task Force of the American Library Association.

Sara Ruddick is the author of *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace.* She has co-edited three anthologies, most recently *Mother Troubles: Reflections on Contemporary Maternal Dilemmas.* For many years she taught at The New School University in New York City where she lives.

Lori Saint-Martin is a professor in the literature department at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She has published two books of short fiction, *Lettre imaginaire à la femme de mon amant* (1991) and *Mon père, la nuit* (1999), French translations of six English-Canadian novels, in collaboration with Paul Gagné (one of which, *Un parfum de cèdre*, a translation of Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*, won the Governor General's award for translation in 2000), and several books of non-fiction on women's writing in Québec, including *Le nom de la mère: Mères, filles et écriture dans la littérature québécoise au féminin* (*The Name of the Mother: Mothers, Daughters and Writing in Quebec Women's Fiction*), 1999. A book-length feminist study of Gabrielle Roy's fiction, *La voyageuse et la prisonnière: Gabrielle Roy et la question des femmes*, is forthcoming from Éditions du Boréal. With Paul Gagné, she has two children, Nicolas, born in 1993, and Anna, born in 1995.

Carolyn Cornils Scherer, MSW, is employed as Assistant Director at Redeemer Center for Life in North Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her areas of interest include treatment foster care, youth leadership development and other youth-related program development.

Susan Swanson lives on a farm south of Ottawa with her partner and dog. Although Susan earned a B.A. (Psychology) and a M.Ed. (Counselling), and

specializes in clear language writing about health and social justice, she learns the most from her 31-year-old daughter and her four-year-old and two-year-old granddaughters.

Sharon Talley is Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi where she teaches early American literature, women's literature, and literary theory. She has published or forthcoming articles on Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott, and Ambrose Bierce and is currently writing a book-length study of Herman Melville.

Dawn L. Wright Williams is a researcher and part-time librarian employed at Georgia Perimeter College. She holds Master's degrees in African American Studies and Library and Information Studies from Clark Atlanta University. Among her research interests are oral histories with specific concerns that include grandmothers and grandmothering in the African Diaspora. She is married and a home schooling mother of two daughters.

yaya Yao is a writer, musician and community activist born in Toronto. Raised by her grandmother, parents, aunties and uncles, she celebrates their patience and teachings and gives thanks to growling butterfly. Her work has been published in *Fireweed, Sisters of the Sun* and *Queer Voices.*

Call for Papers

HAPPY 10th ANNIVERSARY ARM!

The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) is thrilled to invite abstract submissions for our 10th Anniversary conference:

The Motherlode: A Complete Celebration of Motherhood

October 26-29, 2006
York University, Toronto, Canada

This conference promises to be our most comprehensive investigation of motherhood issues to date. We welcome submissions from students, activists, scholars, artists and others who work or research in this area. Cross-cultural, historical and comparative work is encouraged. We encourage a variety of types of submissions including academic papers, workshops, performances, storytelling, visual arts and other alternative formats.

Suggestions for Keynotes welcome!
Email us at arm@yorku.ca with your ideas.

If you are interested in being considered as a presenter, please send a 250-word abstract and a 50-word bio by March 1, 2006 to:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson, York University, 4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366, or email us at arm@yorku.ca
or visit our website at www.yorku.ca/crm

COME SHARE THE FESTIVITIES!
COME SHARE THE LODE!

One must be a member of ARM for 2006
in order to submit an abstract.
Membership must be received with your submission.

——Call for Papers——

The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
invites submission of abstracts for our
2006 Mother's Day conference on:

Carework and Caregiving: Theory and Practice

May 5 – May 7, 2006
York University, Toronto, Canada

We welcome submissions from students, activists, scholars, artists and others who work or research in this area. Cross-cultural, historical and comparative work is encouraged. We encourage a variety of types of submissions including academic papers, workshops, performances, storytelling, visual arts and other alternative formats.

Topics can include, but are not limited to:

- •Caregiving as Work
- •Care and Social Power
- •Care and Economics: Valuing paid and unpaid carework
- •Carework: Research objectives and findings
- •Carework and Social Policy: Analysis, activism and advocacy
- •Caring for Children:Social norms, cultural ideals, feminist discourse, scientific inquiry and expert advice
- •Framing Carework: Defining the process and practice of care
- •Mothering and the Politics of Care: Family values, feminism and ethics of care
- •The Globalization of Care
- •The Right to Care: Legal questions and solutions
- •The Work of the Body: Experiences of intimacy and embodiment in caregiving
- •Writing about care and carework – popular and dissenting discourses
- •Sharing Care: Progress and resistance to fully-shared parenting for gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples

Confirmed keynote speakers include:

Nancy Folbre,
author of
The Invisible Heart and *Who Cares for The Children*

Joan C. Tronto,
author of
Moral Boundaries: a Political Argument for an Ethic of Care

Eva Feder Kittay,
author of
Love's Labor,
editor, *The Subject of Care: Feminist Perspectives on Dependency*

Judy Stadtman Tucker,
editor of
Mothersmovement.org

We welcome submissions from a variety of disciplines. If you are interested in being considered as a speaker, please send a 250-word abstract and a 50-word bio by **March 1, 2006** to:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson, York University,
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366,
Email: arm@yorku.ca Fax: (416) 736-5766
Website: www.yorku.ca/crm

One must be a member of ARM for 2006
in order to submit an abstract.
Membership must be received with your submission.

——Call for Papers——

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 8.1 of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* (ARM) to be published in Fall/Winter 2006.

The journal will explore the subject:

Young Mothers

The journal will explore the topic of Young Mothers from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, artists, mothers and others who work or research in this area. We also welcome creative reflections such as poetry, short stories, and artwork on the subject.

If you are interested in writing a book review, we have books in need of a review, or if you know of a recent publication that you think would be relevant, please contact arm@yorku.ca

Submission guidelines:
Book reviews are to be no more than 2 pages (500 words),
articles should be 15 pages (3750 words).
All should be MLA style, in WordPerfect or
Word and IBM compatible.

For more information, please contact us at:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson, York University,
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366,
Email: arm@yorku.ca Fax: (416) 736-5766
Website: www.yorku.ca/crm

Submissions must be received by May 1, 2006.

To submit work to the journal, one must be a member of ARM and memberships must be received by May 1, 2006.

Call for Papers

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Volume 9.1 of the Journal of The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) to be published in Fall/Winter 2007.

Mothering, Race, Ethnicity, Culture and Class

The journal will explore the topic of mothering, race, ethnicity, culture, and class from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, artists, mothers and others who work or research in this area. We also welcome creative reflections such as poetry, short stories, and artwork on the subject.

If you are interested in writing a book review, we have books in need of a review, or if you know of a recent publication that you think would be relevant, please contact arm@yorku.ca

Submission guidelines:
Book reviews are to be no more than 2 pages (500 words), articles should be 15 pages (3750 words).
All should be MLA style, in WordPerfect or Word and IBM compatible.

For more information, please contact us at:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson, York University,
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366,
Email: arm@yorku.ca Fax: (416) 736-5766
Website: www.yorku.ca/crm

Submissions must be received by November 1, 2006.

To submit work to the journal, one must be a member of ARM and memberships must be received by November 1, 2006.

Mother Goddess of India: A Varansi Tour

We're holding a spot for you!
Join us for this once in a lifetime mothering pilgrimage!

The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) is delighted to invite participants for a two week study tour on the Mother Goddess facilitated by Dr. Andrea O'Reilly, Director of ARM and Batya Weinbaum, leading scholar on the Goddess and author of *Islands of Women and the Amazons: Representations and Realities.*

Dr. Weinbaum will conduct a two-hour class each day of the tour. Complete itinerary is available at www.yorku.ca/crm. Dr. Weinbaum's bio is available upon request.

The subject of the history of matriarchal consciousness as expressed through early goddess archetypes has been a central issue in feminist theory since the early seventies when women began to wonder what preceded patriarchy.

India was one of the original seats of the maternal presence of the divine that led women to wonder if there were not antecedents to the current suffering of women under patriarchal civilization. Artifacts of historical periods still exist today, which can be visited in museums as well as in contemporary shrines in which religious followers still pay homage to the goddess in her many maternal manifestations through yearly pilgrimage. Varansi, a city on the holy river Ganges, holds shrines of nine devis (goddesses) which are visited regularly by Indian Hindu pilgrims and are honored in celebrations and festivities of their own on annual cycles.

If you are interested in joining us for this incredible journey, please visit our website for full itinerary, registration forms, fees, and details: www.yorku.ca/crm.

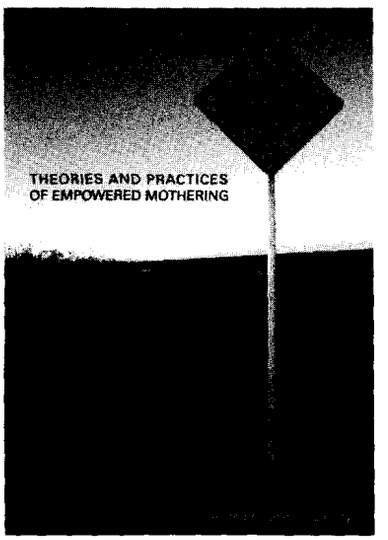
A deposit of $500 is due with your forms by Oct 1, 2005.
Balance is due March 1, 2006.

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson, York University, 4700 Keele St.
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366, or email us at arm@yorku.ca
Or visit our website at www.yorku.ca/crm

Contents

Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering

Edited by Andrea O'Reilly



Andrea O'Reilly, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University. She is co-editor/editor of five books on Motherhood: *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns* (Second Story Press, 1998), *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity and the Struggle to Raise our Sons* (Routledge Press 2001), *From Motherhood to Mothering: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (SUNY, 2004), *Mother Matters: Mothering as Discourse and Practice* (ARM Press, 2004) and author of *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart,* (SUNY, 2004). O'Reilly is founding president of the Association for Research on Mothering, (ARM); the first feminist association on the topic of mothering-motherhood with more than 500 members worldwide, and is founding and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. Andrea and her common-law spouse of twenty-one years are the parents of three teenagers.

Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* distinguished between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the *potential* relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution* which aims at ensuring that that potential and all women shall remain under male control. The term motherhood refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood which is male-defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women, while the word mothering refers to women's experiences of mothering which are female-defined and centred and potentially empowering to women. The reality of oppressive motherhood thus must be distinguished from the possibility or potentiality of empowered mothering. While most feminist scholars now distinguish mothering from motherhood and recognize that the former is not inherently oppressive, empowered mothering has not been theorized in feminist scholarship.

The theory and practice of empowered mothering recognizes that both mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life, and practices mothering, from a position of agency, authority, authenticity and autonomy. Secondly, this new perspective, in emphasizing maternal authority and ascribing agency to mothers and value to motherwork, defines motherhood as a political site wherein mother can affect social change through feminist child rearing and in the world at large through political-social activism. This collection examines how mothers seek to imagine and implement a theory and practice of mothering that is *empowering* to women as opposed to oppressive, under five sections: Feminist Mothering, Lesbian Mothering, African American Mothering, Mothers and Daughters, Mothers and Sons.

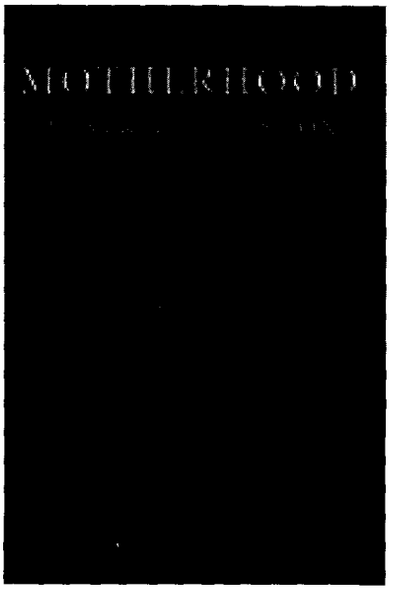
May 2004 0-88961-446-6 pb 454 pp C$49.95 US$39.95
7 x 9 Women's Press

Distributed by Georgetown Terminal Warehouses
To Order:
(tel)1-866-870-2775 (fax) 1-905-873-6170 or
orders@gtwcanada.com

For additional information, or to request an examination copy of this title for course consideration, please contact:
Cheryl Steele
Marketing and Sales Associate
CSPI/Women's Press, 80 Bloor Street West, Suite 801
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2V6
csteele@cspi.org 416-929-2774 ext 18

Motherhood
Power and Oppression

Edited by Marie Porter, Patricia Short and Andrea O'Reilly



ISBN 0-88961-454-7
C$34.95 US$27.95
pb 300pp 6 x 9
Women's Press, Toronto

In feminism, the institution of mothering/motherhood has been a highly contested area in how it relates to the oppression of women. As Adrienne Rich articulated in her classic 1976 book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, although motherhood as an institution is a male-defined site of oppression, women's own experiences of mothering can nonetheless be a source of power. This volume examines four locations wherein motherhood is simultaneously experienced as a site of oppression and of power: embodiment, representation, practice and separation. *Motherhood* includes psychological, historical, sociological, literary and cultural approaches to inquiry and a wide range of disciplinary perspectives—qualitative, quantitative, corporeal, legal, religious, fictional, mythological, dramatic and action research. This rich collection not only covers a wide range of subject matter but also illustrates ways of *doing* feminist research and practice.

Contents:

at War with the Empire? Canadian and Australian Perspectives on the Motherhood Debate in the British Empire During the Great War by Karin Ikas; 6) Mothering and Stress Discourses: A Deconstruction of the Interrelationship of Discourses on Mothering and Stress by Erika Horwitz and Bonita C. Long; 7) A Lesser Woman? Fictional Representations of the Childless Woman by Enza Gandolfo; 8) (Mis) Conceptions: The Paradox of Maternal Power and Loss in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Paradise* by Andrea O'Reilly; 9) Human and Divine Mothers in Hinduism by Tamara Ditrich. **Section III: Practices**—10) Resistance Narratives From Mothers of Married Daughters in Singapore by Hing Ai Yun; 11) Survival Narratives of Ethiopian Jewish Mothers and Daughters in Israel by Ruby Newman; 12) Down Under Power? Australian Mothering Experiences in the 1950s, 60s by Marie Porter; 13) Mothers at Home: Oppressed or Oppressors or Victims of False Dichotomies? by Elizabeth Reid Boyd; 14) Mothers at the Margins: Singular Identities and Survival by Patricia Short. **Section IV: Separation**—15) Naming Maternal Alienation by Anne Morris; 16) Women of Courage: The Non–Custodial Mother by Julie Thacker; 17) Abandoning Mothers and Their Children by Anita Pavlovic, Audrey Mullender and Rosemary Aris; 18) When Eve Left The Garden: A Modern Tale About Mothers Who Leave Their Families by Petra Büskens; 19) Conclusion by Patricia Short.

About the Editors:
Marie Porter is a lecturer in the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, University of Queensland, Australia. **Patricia Short** is a lecturer in the School of Social Science, University of Queensland, Australia. **Dr. Andrea O'Reilly** is Director of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) and Associate Professor of Women's Studies, York University. She is the author of *Mother Outlaws* (Women's Press, 2004).

To order contact:
Georgetown Terminal Warehouse Limited
34 Armstrong Avenue
Georgetown, ON L7G 4R9
1.866.870.CSPI(2774) Fax: 905.873.6170 orders@gtwcanada.com

For additional information, or to request a copy of this book for the purposes of course consideration, please contact:
Cheryl Steele, Marketing & Sales Associate
CSPI/Women's Press, 180 Bloor Street West, ste 801
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2V6
tel: 416-929-2774 x 18 csteele@cspi.org

Association for Research on Mothering

ARM 2006/07 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please indicate your membership option (one year and two year memberships/subscriptions are available):

Full ARM Membership **includes: subscription to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* •members directory •listserve •reduced conference fees**

❑ individual $ 85.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs/ind. $160.00 Cdn/US*
❑ institution $120.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs/inst. $230.00 Cdn/US*

Sustaining Full ARM Membership**: as a sustaining member, your extra contribution will help ensure that ARM, a non-profit organization, can continue to meet its operating costs. 2006/07 sustaining members will receive a free back issue.**

❑ 1 yr individual/institutional sustaining membership $150.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs individual/institutional sustaining membership $275.00 Cdn/US*

Basic ARM Membership **includes: •members directory •listserve •reduced conference fees**

❑ individual $60.00 Cdn/US*
❑ student/unwaged $45.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs/ind. $110.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs/student/unwaged $80.00 Cdn/US*

Subscription to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*: (a biannual publication)

❑ individual $34.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs/ind. $62.00 Cdn/US*
❑ institution $68.00 Cdn/US*
❑ 2 yrs/inst. $130.00 Cdn/US*

****Overseas residents must add $12.00 in U.S. funds to cover mailing costs.***

Available back issues

Vol. 2 No. 1 Mothers and Sons	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 2 No. 2 Mothering in the African Diaspora	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 3 No. 1 Becoming a Mother	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 3 No. 2 Mothering, Fathering, and ... Peace	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 4 No. 1 Mothering, Sex and Sexuality	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*

Association for Research on Mothering

Vol. 4 No. 2 Mothering and Literature	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 5 No. 1 Mothering, Popular Culture & the Arts	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 5 No. 2 Mothering in the Academy	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 6 No. 1 Mothering, Law, Politics & Public Policy	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 6 No. 2 Mothering & Work/Mothering as Work	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 7 No. 1 Mothering, Religion & Spirituality	❑ $15.00 Cdn/US*
Vol. 7 No. 2 Grandmothers and Grandmothering	❑ $18.00 Cdn/US*

Please add $5.00 per issue to cover shipping costs in Canada, and $12.00 per issue for orders to the US or overseas.

Please make cheque payable to ARM in either Cdn. funds, U.S. funds, or international money orders. Visa/Mastercard credit card payments are also accepted on our website: www.yorku.ca/crm. Important note: ARM membership must be renewed annually in January.

Please indicate the following:

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Telephone_____Fax_____

Email_____

Ten key words to describe interests in the area of mothering/ motherhood:_____

_____

_____

_____

Permission to include in membership directory: ❑ yes ❑ no

Would you like to be added to ARM listserve?: ❑ yes ❑ no

For credit card payment: I, _____,

authorize a debit on my card for the amount of _____

Visa/Mastercard no. _____ Exp. _____

Name on card_____

Signature _____ Date _____

To join ARM please send this completed form and payment to the address indicated on the back of this page!

Mail in your membership form today!
Just fold here and tape together.

Stamp

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson College,
York University
4700 Keele Street,
Toronto ON M3J 1P3
Telephone: (416) 736-2100 x 60366
Email: arm@yorku.ca
Website: www.yorku.ca/crm