

Many mothers will identify with Nnu Ego's wry observations: "When the children were good they belonged to the father; when they were bad, they belonged to the mother", "If you don't have children the longing for them will kill you, and if you do, the worrying over them will kill you", "Some fathers... can reject a bad son, a master can reject his evil servant, a wife can even leave a bad husband, but a mother can never, never reject her son. If he is damned, she is damned with him", and about a woman staying in a loveless marriage, "We tolerate each other for the children, just for the children."

Woven throughout the story are the author's own reflections on traditional African society's view of women as second-class citizens. Her feminism is clear in the thoughts she ascribes to Nnu Ego: "I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life, my father and my husband—and now I have to include my sons. But who made the law that we should not hope in our daughters? We women subscribe to that law more than anyone. Until we change all this, it is still a man's world, which women will always help to build."

"When We Chose Canada": A Mother and Daughter Share Stories That Shaped Their Lives In Their New Homeland.

Sherry Ramrattan Smith and Rose Bickram Ramrattan
Waterloo: Pandora Press 1999.

Reviewed by Laura Thomas

In 1969 the Ramrattan family – mother, father, daughter, and son – left politically unstable Trinidad to find a better home in Canada. In this self-published excerpt from her Master's thesis, Sherry Ramrattan Smith shares her story and her mother Rose's story about adjusting to life in Canada as immigrant women of colour. In the tradition of feminist collaborative research, Ramrattan Smith analyzes how daughter and mother adapted to and constructed meaning in a hegemonic, white society by juxtaposing and including simultaneously a "daughter's take" and a "mother's snapshot" of their experiences. Through this exploratory, qualitative, approach she is able to tease out of these personal narratives issues such as perceptions of freedom, acceptance and identity, emotional trauma, "Canadian-ness," and skin hue in relation to citizenship.

Along with the personal desire to live and express agency, voice and empowerment, a major purpose of this work is to help educators understand the special needs, particularly self-esteem issues, of immigrant students of colour and their parents. The author does this by including a thought-provoking

section that discusses the pedagogical implications of the personal narratives. She also provides her own reflection notes and questions for further discussion. Like the issues she is trying to expose in this work, the entire research process is deliberately transparent and accessible. *When We Chose Canada* is a conceptual springboard into the following social phenomena: patriarchy and the role of the patriarch in immigration, racism and immigration, acceptance into Canadian society, roles of women in the family, and independence and empowerment for immigrant women.

Indeed, to make this book an even more valuable tool for educators and female immigrant students, it would have been helpful to situate its discussion in the history of Canadian immigration, from 1969 to the present and the rise of “multi-race” anti-racist pedagogy, both in the academy and at the community level. Primary and secondary sources relating to the evolution of these broader themes during the last 30 years, would have helped situate Smith Ramrattan’s excellent work in a larger political context. The contrived timelessness of the personal narratives (stories and/or memories) weakens her argument because it brings into question the external reliability of these narratives; the reader is not given evidence to back up the women’s stories. While the stories are excellent examples of how the personal is political, “creating an inclusive educational system where each person is valued and accepted for their [sic] contributions” (70) cannot be done by the sharing of personal stories alone, these stories must be contextualized in time, space, and place.

This book makes an important contribution to maternal scholarship because it includes both mother’s and daughter’s voices and the experiences of an immigrant mother and mother of colour in Canada. It is also a helpful example of co-authorship and intergenerational communication between mothers and daughters, and highlights the importance of family stories as a site of knowledge and identity (re)production.

Immigrant Mothers: Narratives of Race and Maternity 1890-1925

Katrina Irving
Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Reviewed by Jennifer Harris

The title *Immigrant Mothers: Narratives of Race and Maternity 1890-1925* might be slightly misleading: Katrina Irving’s study has little to do with the lives of actual immigrant women. Instead, Irving takes as her subject turn-of-the-century cultural representations of immigrant women and men as imagined,