

book, that: “women’s lives are orchestrated within the confines of family, community, and societal structures” all of which “are part of, and connect to, the larger culture and the world community” (11).

Family structures are the focus of the first two chapters. Chapter 1 deals with traditional meanings of marriage within various societies and the ways in which these subsequently affect women’s treatment in the family. Chapter 2 explores diverse structures beyond the monogamous, heterosexual family formation and the different place of women in alternative family formats around the world. The remaining four chapters cover what Conway-Turner and Cherrin identify as the other global concerns of women—reproduction and sexual standards, women’s work, health care, and violence. The primary data and the case studies included in all the chapters add reality to the discussions and bring women’s voices to the forefront. Taken together, the chapters point out that while women’s issues are similar worldwide, they “vary enough to make comparisons informative and useful for a feminist future” (209).

I found the strength of the book to lie in its organization and comprehensive coverage of the key concerns presented. I also found the book sufficiently scholarly to warrant its use in university courses on women’s issues. Yet from my position as a professor of education, I was struck by the paucity of attention to the topic of education for women. Beyond a few pages in the chapter on women and work, issues of women’s education around the world received minimal attention. I also found the concluding chapter somewhat disappointing; it was too brief, it contained too many over-generalized platitudes, and it failed to celebrate some of the wonderful progress that has been made by women around the world. These reservations aside, I did enjoy this book and I did learn a good deal. I recommend it to anyone interested in women and the future of women worldwide.

An Unconventional Family

Sandra Lipsitz Bem
Hartford/London: Yale University Press, 1998

Reviewed by Rachel Josefowitz Siegel

This short memoir (209 pages) is fascinating, deeply moving, and thought provoking. We are drawn into the 30-year history of a remarkably creative marriage and family.

Sandra Lipsitz Bem is a professor of Psychology and former Chair of

Women's Studies at Cornell University. She is known among psychologists, feminists, and gender scholars for her groundbreaking early work on psychological androgyny. Her Bem Sex Role Inventory, BSIR (1971), is still widely used. Her essays on non-sexist, egalitarian child rearing are frequently cited. The recipient of prestigious awards, she ranks among the earliest and most important leaders in and shapers of the field of Gender Studies. These impressive credentials do not prepare the reader for the impact of her personal story.

An Unconventional Family follows the publication of her previous book *The Lenses of Gender* (1993). In the prologue she states: "If *The Lenses of Gender* is the statement of my theory, *An Unconventional Family* is the statement of my practice. More specifically, it is an autobiographical account of an attempt by a woman and a man to function as truly egalitarian partners and also to raise children in accordance with gender-liberated, antihomophobic, and sex-positive feminist ideals."

Sandra Lipsitz married Daryl Bem in 1965. During their courtship, and with amazing clarity of thought and intentionality, this young couple developed the egalitarian concepts and feminist ideals that they lived by from then on. Pioneers in the early women's movement, they lectured to large popular audiences, teaching other couples how to implement these ideas.

Dr. Bem writes about applying her ideology to child-rearing. The text is sprinkled with humorous anecdotes that convey day-to-day details and the dilemmas in teaching her children Emily and Jeremy to live by standards that set them apart from the mainstream, without causing them to feel isolated or to lose self-esteem. In the process she also taught them to know and understand the value of differences. Dr. Bem's "vision of utopia has always been ... genderless." She taught her children to defy gender norms, to think of same-sex relationships as no more or less normal than relationships with the opposite sex, and to feel positive about their sexuality. Her motto was to "retard their gender education while advancing their sex education." I recommend that you read her book to find out what she meant and how she did it.

The chapter on her unorthodox career before she arrived at Cornell is heart wrenching. We read about the sexist practices that confronted her, when academic gender discrimination was not yet recognized as sexual harassment.

Sandra reports that she and Daryl Bem separated about four years ago. Since then they have both had same-sex partners; their children are now in their 20s. They all continue to be deeply involved with one another and consider themselves family. In the final section Jeremy, Emily, and Daryl speak for themselves in assessing the family "experiment" without minimizing the difficulties and minor imperfections. According to their own account this unconventional family sees itself successful in meeting its goals and in nurturing individual development. Their story challenges many conventional assumptions.