

many women giving birth to their first children in the 40 to 44 age range” (3, emphasis in original).

Despite differing circumstances that lead to the delay of motherhood, all women choose to become pregnant when they feel ready, both financially and psychologically, to have a child. Once they are ready, women enter family life through natural childbirth or adoption, with determination, commitment, and a great deal of joy.

As with other social phenomenon, later motherhood has positive and negative features. Gregory cites later mothers’ high levels of education, equal relationships with their partners, and financial independence. Also, since these women often enter motherhood at an advanced stage of their careers, they have the power to negotiate employment flexibility. Invariably, however, later mothers tend to have fewer children and feel less energetic. They also face the possibility of infertility, although reliable statistical data on this issue is not available.

Despite the many benefits of later motherhood, it is important to note that this path is usually chosen by women of socially privileged backgrounds. In fact, the majority of women giving birth still have to juggle mothering and poorly paid jobs; they experience financial insecurity and lack career opportunities. Later mothers, Gregory suggests, can effectively change this social reality by advocating for the rights of mothers of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and social status.

Don’t Bite Your Tongue: How to Foster Rewarding Relationships with Your Adult Children

Ruth Nemzoff.
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Reviewed by Rosie Rosenzweig

Ruth Nemzoff has written a long-needed primer on the fundamental relationship between mother and child. She has authored an easy-to-read book that begins where pediatrician Dr. Spock and his followers left off: parenting the adult child. Nemzoff advises parents to reassess their expectations of adult children (regarding college, career, marriage, and grandchildren), to reassess self-esteem garnered from the accomplishments of their offspring, and to examine the child resident in every parent as a result of his or her own childhood. She advises against biting one’s tongue with adult children. Instead, her book “reimagines the process of second-stage parenting as a time to get to know our children as adults, and to allow them to get to know us” (4).

According to Nemzoff, parents need to reconcile their fantasies with the reality of their adult children and unearth a new vocabulary for the childhood descriptors “parent” and “child.” As she wryly notes, today “Grandmothers wear jeans and elementary-school children wear high heels.”

How, then, should parents build solid relationships with their adult children? How can they nurture open discussion of such potentially contentious issues as finance, career, relationships, marriage, grandchildren, religion, and ethnicity? Nemzoff offers the example of Maggie and Morgan who endured decades of Morgan’s mother’s vocal disapproval. Their love endured through separation, eventual marriage, and three children. Due to the judgmental attitude of her mother-in-law, however, Maggie’s mother is the preferred grandmother by her children while Morgan’s mother is repaid for her lack of tact and insight with the absence of their affection.

As Nemzoff warns, disapproval—when directly expressed—will alienate the adult child. She counsels parents to voice their concern in a gracious, tactful, and understated way that shows support for their adult children. Nemzoff’s many years as a relationship coach provide appropriate examples for readers to follow. Each chapter concludes with questions to guide our thinking about lifelong parenting and to help readers gain insight into themselves, their children, and their society.

Mother Matters: Motherhood as Discourse and Practice

Andrea O’Reilly, ed.

Toronto: Association for Research on Mothering, 2004.

Reviewed by Jennifer Hauver James

*... I have been invisible,
weird and supernatural.
I want my black dress.
I want my hair
curling wild around me.
I want my broomstick
from the closet where I hid it.
Tonight I meet my sisters
in the graveyard.
Around midnight
if you stop at a red light
in the wet city traffic,*