

game—"fast passing and fast breaking," as the team members describe it. They didn't need to resort to other tactics to draw the crowds.

And draw the crowds they did. For 25 years, the Grads packed stadiums around the world, becoming a phenomenon in the process. They were magic.

They burst onto the scene at a time when women's sport was just becoming accepted. Not too accepted, mind you. These women were stars at the same time as my grandmother, also an Edmonton resident, was told that women don't speed skate.

It was a time of change, however. Canadian women, in particular, dominated the world sport scene—Velma Springstead and Myrtle Cook among them.

Shooting Stars manages to capture the excitement of the times for these young women and for the country which cheered them on. Combining interviews with players, voice-over narrative and some original footage, we come to understand what these women accomplished. But their accomplishments, though spectacular, are the least of the story.

What is to me truly remarkable about the team is the commitment of these athletes to each other. They lived and played the sporting ideals of fair play and the pursuit of excellence. Their absolute commitment to the game, to their coach and to their fans made these athletes superstars.

In the video the players speak of the pressure of their fans' expectations. Their response to that pressure was always gracious and remarkable. To thank their fans, in the spring the team would travel to small towns for exhibition games. Team members also speak in the video of sneaking young girls into their games so they could watch without having to pay. One simply can't imagine either of these things happening now.

Watching *Shooting Stars*, one can't help but wish for a return to the days when sport stood for higher ideals. Maybe films such as this can help bring us toward those days again.

CANADIAN FAMILIES: DIVERSITY, CONFLICT AND CHANGE

Nancy Mandell and Ann Duffy, Eds.
Toronto: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1995.

by Rina Cohen

The growing diversity of household and relationship configurations on the threshold of the 21st century challenged feminist scholars and researchers to develop new conceptualizations of contemporary families. This challenge was successfully met by Mandell and Duffy in their excellent new text—*Canadian Families: Diversity, Conflict and Change*. The choice of the plural "families" reflects the postmodern nature of Canadian families in the 1990s as well as the recognition and inclusion of all committed relationships among individuals and their children. Multiplicity of voices and experiences are presented, exploring sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism and ageism that impede different family experiences.

The book is a collaborative collection of nine clear and well written chapters, providing a comprehensive feminist critique of traditional family sociology. It is divided into three broad sections: a) the historic and social context of change, b) diversities in Canadian families, and c) policy issues.

The first section includes two chapters that lay out both the historical context of modern Canadian families and the process of changing gender patterns. The historical journey, in the first chapter, starts with hunting/gathering egalitarian families, through horticulture-based Native families and agriculture-based patriarchal European families. The chapter skillfully explores the profound effect of industrialization on family life and ends with modern diverse family relations.

The second chapter in this section documents gender inequities in Canadian families in the past 30 years. It

analyses these changes in light of political and economic developments in Canada since the sixties.

The second section provides students with three chapters reflecting diversity in family experiences. The first chapter examines how Canadian families have changed since the early 1930s. Focusing on women's roles in families, the chapter identifies both diverging as well as converging trends in family lifestyles. The second chapter presents same-sex intimate relations inside and outside conventional families. While atypical, the inclusion of a chapter on contextualizing same-sex relationships within family sociology is mostly desirable. This chapter examines the marginalization of lesbians and gay men from family networks. It documents the pervasive homophobic and heterosexist ideology that presents lesbians and gay men as threats to families. And, most important, it uncovers the vulnerability of lesbian and gay youth, their isolation and suicidal behaviours, their families' rejection and their victimization and harassment at school. The last chapter in this section provides the reader with a rich account of racist policies and exploitative practices which affect the family life of Native peoples, immigrants, and visible minorities.

The last section of the book offers the reader three chapters on family policy. The first one describes the history of the Canadian welfare state and the contradictions within and among social policies, paying particular attention to legislation that perpetuates women's dependency, marginalizes aboriginal women and women of colour, and discriminates against lesbians. The second chapter in this section displays the personal, social, and political consequences of persistent poverty. It demonstrates to students the structural inequality in Canadian society and shatters their belief in a mythologized meritocracy. The last chapter in the book documents and theorizes family violence. This chapter powerfully links human agency and social structure, revealing the connections between personal

experiences and systemic inequality.

The book documents the historical changes in Canadian families as well as the plurality of and contradictions in family experiences. The collection includes diverse experiences such as divorce, same-sex couples, minority families, poverty and violence. It is surprising, however, that issues such as age as a source of family oppression, intergenerational conflicts, children's interpretation of family experiences and aging in (and outside) families were not included.

Despite these omissions, this textbook is both useful and effective in challenging students to raise politically contentious issues about intimate and personal matters. The questions at the end of each chapter are helpful in stimulating classroom discussions, enabling students to identify personal or biographical experiences and to connect these experiences to social and political realities. Each chapter provides an extensive bibliography and a list of additional readings for those wishing to further explore a particular issue. The book is valuable to those who seek an understanding of Canadian families. It can be readily adopted as a main text for undergraduate family courses and as a supplementary resource for courses on women and Canadian social policy.

WHO STOLE FEMINISM? HOW WOMEN HAVE BETRAYED WOMEN

Christina Hoff Sommers. Simon & Schuster, 1994.

by Carol Margaret Davison

Within the present backlash climate, the publication of Christina Hoff Sommers' *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* was largely foreseeable. Like its 1993 sister text, Katie Roiphe's *The Morning*

After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism On Campus which depicted feminists as frigid hysterics who created the date rape crisis, Sommers' controversial *J'Accuse* provides an extremely uncomplimentary portrait of feminists as a group of frenzied "gender warriors" in quest of recruits, vindication, and ammunition. Predictably, most North American feminists have relegated this book to their overcrowded backlash shelf, a justified reaction to Sommers' smug, often shortsighted liberal idealism, and occasional McCarthyite rhetoric. Apart from her stale critique of the chimera known in backlash vocabulary as "victim feminism," however, Sommers does advance at least one legitimate criticism which the feminist movement, recently plagued by exceptionally bad press, cannot afford to ignore.

An associate professor of philosophy at Boston's Clark University, Sommers takes her book's title from her main contention that "gender feminists have stolen feminism from a mainstream that had never acknowledged their leadership." It was the ascendancy of this new feminism, characterized by gynocentrism and misandry, over liberal "equity feminism," and not a media backlash as Susan Faludi has claimed, that led to women's large-scale defection from the movement. Upholding Naomi Wolf's utopian presentation of women's status and opportunities in *Fire With Fire*, Sommers maintains that gender feminism (the equivalent of Wolf's "victim feminism"), is both reprehensible and superfluous in 1994 when, as she claims, "artistically gifted women do have their level playing field," and women make eighty cents to a man's dollar.

In the light of these generally unacknowledged advancements, Sommers muses over two issues: why "everyone" is so credulous of gender feminism, and why its adherents are so eager "to put men in a bad light." Alongside Sommers' failure to clearly define gender and equity feminism, her latter observation is nowhere supported. She does gesture toward answering the former, however, in her

contention that academics are so credulous of gender feminism because it promotes the shedding of their passive ivory-tower skins. "By supporting and promoting transformationism, not only do school administrators build up their résumés, they get to feel they are participating in the educational equivalent of the storming of the Bastille." The intriguing issue raised here of the academy's concern with social activism over the past few decades unfortunately remains, like Sommers' few speculative ideas, unexplored.

While the existence of hard-core misandrist feminists in the academy is as undeniable as the existence of their hard-core misogynist counterparts, they are by no means in the feminist majority, nor are they dictating the academic agenda. Sommers' main problem is her simple extremist perspective. She denies the existence of abusive men, unfairly implies that only the feminist movement has its extremists, and consistently makes the exception the rule by tarring every feminist attentive to factors of social conditioning with the same brush—they are dangerous, man-hating, Marxist ideologues who threaten liberal academic freedoms. In the face of this treacherous situation, Sommers effectively yearns for the good old days of some twenty years ago before the traditional liberal humanist agenda was subjected to scrutiny. In its implications that liberalism is devoid of an agenda or blindspots, and that "feminism is fascism," Sommers' unoriginal book joins the ranks of many recent publications.

Ironically, Sommers' study is often guilty of the hysteria which she ascribes to gender feminism. Maintaining that most American women's studies programs do nothing but brainwash, for example, she suggests in true Pat Buchanan-style rhetoric that the following cautionary note for parents should preface the curriculum bulletins—Your daughter "will very likely reject the religious and moral codes you raised her with. She may well distance herself from family and friends. She may change