



Editorial

by Eimear O'Neill and Marion Lynn Colby

Women's sense of self, as understood in a new psychological paradigm developed by feminist theorists such as Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan, is rooted in a web of relationships. Disconnection and violation in those relationships leads to deep injury in that core sense of self. But as the articles in this issue demonstrate, this injury is repairable. Painfully so.

When we called for submissions on women's psychology, we did not anticipate that pain and abuse of women and children would be such a central connecting theme. From such diverse articles as "Hard Times for Farm Women" and "Family Fallout: Nuclear Night-mare," the connection is made between this violence, abuse and negation of self at the individual, personal level, and an overpowering economic, political and social system. But at the grassroots and some academic levels this system is being challenged by women's ways of knowing that value personal experience as much as abstract theory-making. And as Jean Baker Miller states in her Preface to this issue, although women's personal experience does not necessarily provide immediate answers, it opens up new paths which necessitate re-examination of traditional theories and frameworks.

There are profound differences in the day-to-day personal experiences of women with diverse economic, ethnic, racial, sexual preference, and educational status. What might allow us to collaborate and together to use the knowledge gained from our different perspectives, is the

sharing of personal experience at the public level. The articles in this issue from the lives of the homeless, the immigrant, the native Canadian and the therapist demonstrate the challenge being made to psychiatry, the family, the state, and other hierarchical orders both at the personal and social levels.

Experience can be exchanged in many ways. The exchange is especially rich when it is expressed in multiple modalities—including those less restrictive than man-made language. We see such shared experience vividly in Joyce Wieland's art [see pp. 33-37], and in the images of Susan [p. 21], of Maria [p. 10], and of the five-year-old from the shelter in Guelph, Ontario [p. 70]. We hear it in the voices of 'My Mother's Daughter' [pp. 55-57], of Mary from Kirby House Shelter in Newfoundland [pp. 72-73], and of Anna, one of the immigrant women seeking psychiatric treatment [p. 39]. We all feel it in our own pain.

Some of these articles are painful to read. However, it is only when this pain is not denied but is integrated within our personal lives, professional work and theory-making, that it leads to empowerment. This re-covering is a sore and creative process. Instead of dividing our experience as women into the personal/private and professional/public, we need to integrate. We hope this issue of *Canadian Woman Studies* helps to make whole those worlds.

Thank you to all the women who courageously shared your knowledge.

