



Cold War Comforts: Canadian Women, Child Safety, and Global Insecurity

Tarah Brookfield

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If you wish to understand how the Cold War actually affected most Canadians, this is the book to read. Quite properly it directs our attention to women's individual and collective efforts to ensure safety for children at home and abroad. Men might have supplied the Cold War's military face, as with Dr. Strangelove, but the other not-so-gentle sex supplied many of the key strategists for peace. Tarah Brookfield does a wonderful job in telling us just how this happened. Her discussion of bomb shelters, disarmament campaigns, and support for the United Nations, foster parenting, and international adoption is lively and thoughtful and ought to help revitalize Canadian discussion of the relations between foreign policy and domestic affairs.

– Veronica Strong-Boag, University of British Columbia, author of *Fostering Nation? Canada Confronts Its History of Childhood Disadvantage* (WLU Press, 2011)

A compelling Cold War history whose engaging portraits—bomb-shelter civil defence enthusiasts, radical and anti-Communist child welfare crusaders, “ordinary” mothers donating a baby tooth for radiation testing, prominent heads of foreign-aid projects, and the foster and adoptive mothers of children in the Cold War's hot spots—breathe life into this analysis of maternalism and its links, both positive and problematic, to women's nationalist and internationalist child-saving agendas.

– Franca Iacovetta, president, Berkshire Conference of Women Historians

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Cold War Comforts examines Canadian women's efforts to protect children's health and safety between the dropping of the first atomic bomb in Hiroshima in 1945 and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Amid this global insecurity, many women participated in civil defence or joined the disarmament movement as means to protect their families from the consequences of nuclear war. To help children affected by conflicts in Europe and Asia, women also organized foreign relief and international adoptions.

In Canada, women pursued different paths to peace and security. From all walks of life, and from all parts of the country, they dedicated themselves to finding ways to survive the hottest periods of the Cold War. What united these women was their shared concern for children's survival amid Cold War fears and dangers. Acting on their identities as Canadian citizens and mothers, they characterized with their activism the genuine interest many women had in protecting children's health and safety. In addition, their activities offered them a legitimate space to operate in the traditionally male realms of defence and diplomacy. Their efforts had a direct impact on the lives of children in Canada and abroad and influenced changes in Canada's education curriculum, immigration laws, welfare practices, defence policy, and international relations.

Cold War Comforts offers insight into how women employed maternalism, nationalism, and internationalism in their work, and examines shifting constructions of family and gender in Cold War Canada. It will appeal to scholars of history, child and family studies, and social policy.

Tarah Brookfield is an assistant professor at Wilfrid Laurier University's Brantford campus, where she teaches in contemporary studies, history, and youth and children studies.



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