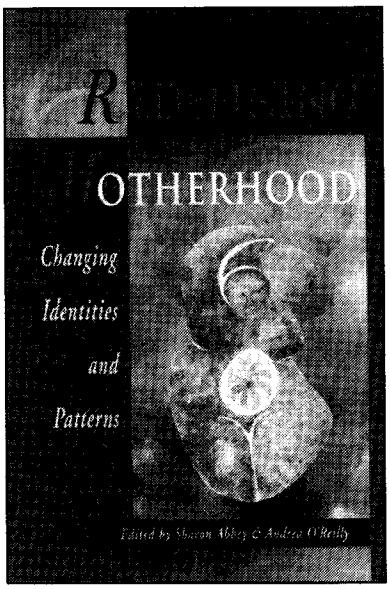


cize, support, refine, and rethink existing theories. Reading the book engaged me in an active reflective process.

The reflective process, both collaborative and individual, is illustrated throughout the book. For example, Andrea O'Reilly describes how her course leads students to "dismantle" the patriarchal mother-daughter estrangement narrative to build a new relational narrative. Elizabeth Diem engages in participatory research discussions with mothers of problematic adolescent daughters which allows them over time to "unravel" the disempowering myth of the perfect mother. Martha McMahon reflects on how the loss of her mother brought insight into her choice to not have children, questioning conceptions of motherhood by examining her subjectivity as a non-mother. Her use of "creatively reconstructed letters to a friend" is a particularly effective means of allowing the reader an "in" on her deliberative process. Rishma Dunlop questions patriarchal assumptions negating the embodied knowledge of female experience and demonstrates the power of writing, especially poetry, to capture and examine women's lived experience.

A particular strength of this book is in the insiders', outsiders', and marginalized voices it presents. Motherhood issues are examined from the perspectives of mothers: academics, teachers, and foster mothers. Those who are not mothers provide an outsider's perspective: adolescent and grown daughters, and the legal and medical establishments. Of particular interest are chapters dealing with those whose stories have not been, or are not often, told. A lesbian mother reflects on her daughter's coming to terms with her "different" family. A researcher describes the dynamic between mothers and daughters in families with a disabled parent. A filmmaker reclaims her historical roots by telling the stories of black mothers in their Nova Scotia communities. Another researcher recounts black women's experiences of motherhood to counter the pathologizing of these families in the "male" literature. A white mother reflects on the role of family narratives in her black daughter's identity formation. All of these voices demonstrate the richness and diversity in the experience of those mothering and those mothered.

The editors facilitate this reflection process in their organization of the chapters into four sections. The first section deals with issues of socialization and education, the second with maternal values and identities, the third with personal and historical narratives, and the last with public and state policy. As such the book flows from the social to personal to public themes, providing a conceptual map accessible to students.

The editors also provide helpful and specific suggestions to instructors for promoting reflection in course activities: through reflective journals, case studies, and thematic research projects. This section includes guidelines for assignments, evaluation, and how certain chapters can be used.

As I pointed out earlier, to read this book is to engage in an ongoing inner dialogue, comparing and contrasting one's own stories and rethinking one's theoretical understandings. The book is alive with the voices of mothers and daughters. It delineates issues in fresh and engaging ways and it models reflection. As such this book makes an engrossing read and an excellent course text.

THE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD

Sharon Hays. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.

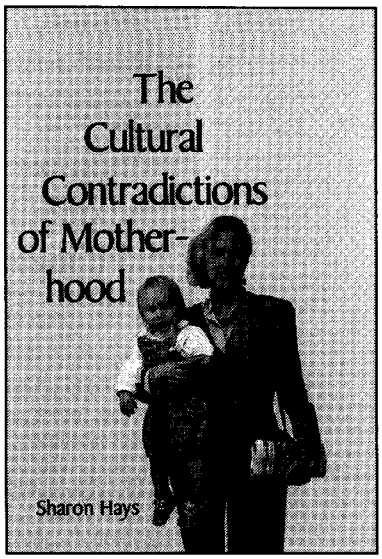
BY BERYL BAIGENT

An assistant professor of sociology and women's studies at the University of Virginia, Sharon Hays has penned a significant book, in seven hefty chapters, which explores the disparity between "intensive mothering" and the work ethic. Her thesis states: "the contemporary cultural model of socially appropriate mothering takes the form of an ideology of intensive mothering ... a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children."

In a society where over half of all mothers with young children are now working outside the home, Hays poses the query as to why western culture pressures women to dedicate so much of themselves to childrearing. She further asks why a logic of unselfish nurturing guides the behaviour of mothers in such a society. These two puzzling phenomena constitute what she calls "the cultural contradictions of contemporary motherhood."

Hays analyzes mothering as an historically constructed ideology. Her method includes in-depth interviews with a small sample of mothers, as well as textual analysis of childrearing manuals, and a survey of the history of ideas on childrearing. She explores the cultural disparity between home and the outside world over the past 200 years in western society, noting that the personal contradiction between being a mother and a career woman is a contemporary occurrence, appearing only in the past 50 years, since women have wished to participate in both worlds.

Hays refers to the '50s as "the era of suburban life, domestic bliss, the



'feminine mystique,' Dr. Spock, and 'momism.'" The '90s portrays career women as competitive go-getters, and the image of the family is one of disintegrating values and relationships in which one would expect a de-emphasis on the ideology of childrearing. The notion that childrearing requires large quantities of money, professional-level skills, and a major outlay of emotional energy on the part of the mother is a recent phenomenon. One solution to intensive mothering, according Hays, would be for society to shift to "intensive parenting." Another solution might be to make child and home care a commercial, rational enterprise.

Hays delves into the historical construction of intensive mothering. In many cultures the child needs to be cared for until the age of six or seven, but strategies vary. Hays offers statistics which indicate that most cultures, in contrast to the American model, do not believe that only mothers are capable of rearing children.

One chapter discusses the variable nature of childrearing "from the earliest discovery of childhood innocence in Western Europe, through the religiously grounded model of the American Puritans, to the dawning of the permissive era" which began in the 1930s. Authority figures like Spock, Brazelton, and Leach are quoted in their "moral treatises," as ones who "demand" intensive mothering. The methods they recommend are child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive, and financially expensive. Children are treated as "sacred, innocent, and pure, their price immeasurable." Each of these authors condemns an impersonal, competitive, and market-relations economy, thus creating a dichotomy which implies that there is something unnatural, false, and therefore bad about life in the outside world. Natural innocence of the child and parents' natural love for progeny create the flip side.

Hays supports the notion that learned behaviours rather than biological instinct account for the variations in mothering. In fact, "mothers are as unique as the children they raise." Hays explains that although class-based differences do not overshadow ideas that most mothers hold in common, class dissimilarity does influence the desired outcome of intensive mothering.

According to Hays, a mother who "lives in both the public and private spheres, exemplifies the depth of the cultural contradictions of contemporary motherhood." She believes that the present model of intensive mothering "suggests that all the troubles of the world can be solved by the individual efforts of superhuman women." This ethos, she notes, is one that places an undue burden on women. While the valorization of motherhood and the innocence of children continues, Hays concludes, this ideology "helps to produce the existing gender hierarchy and to contribute, with little social or financial compensation for the mothers who sustain its tenets, to the maintenance of capitalism and the centralized state." She also sees this ideology as contributing to family violence and the subordination of women.

Appendices include an interview schedule, a survey questionnaire with 72 questions which were completed prior to the interview, end-notes to the chapters, an extensive bibliography, and a comprehensive index which would be useful to readers who wish to use this book as reference.