

theory. This book has 50 chapters by experts in various fields such as psychology, psychoanalysis, literature, sociology, ethics, philosophy, family and social history, anthropology, politics etc. It is an anthology of the most relevant scholarship of the last 30 years.

Maternal Theory has become increasingly important within Feminist Theory. On the one hand, middle-class white women have felt that motherhood hinders their individuality and makes it more difficult to be accepted as equals in the workplace, and on the other hand poor women (both black women and white women) have been put off feminism by the emphasis often given to the need for women to be accepted in the workplace, since working takes them away from the relationship of mothering and nurturing.

'Homeplace', a chapter by bell hooks (she spells her name without capital letters) on the lives of black women who cared and nurtured white families when they longed to have time and energy to give to their own families, is particularly powerful in this respect. These women went to great lengths to create a 'homeplace' of their own, even if it was only in a slave hut or a wooden shack. These stories, discussions and arguments need to get into the mainstream of feminist thought, particularly into mainstream Christian Feminism. Men's need to control this area of women's lives has perhaps historically been as much the cause of women's oppression and lack of a role in a wider society, as have economics and politics.

Contributors include Adrienne Rich, Nancy Chodorow, Sara Ruddick, Alice Walker, Barbara Katz Rothman, bell hooks, Sharon Hays, Patricia Hill Collins, Julia Kristeva, Kim Anderson, Audre Lorde, Ellen Lewin, Daphne de Marneffe, Ariel Gore, Ann Crittenden, Judith Warner and many more. Mothering in feminism is a contentious issue, and this is discussed by many of the writers. Patrice Diquinzio, in her chapter 'Mothering and Feminism: Essential Mothering and the Dilemma of Difference,' says:

Some of feminism's most pressing but also most contradictory demands are issued in the name of mothering. For example, feminism demands that women have freedom, autonomy, and choice with respect to reproduction

and child rearing. But feminism also demands that men participate at least equally in child rearing which may limit mothers' autonomy. Feminism demands that social institutions, policies, and practices treat women as human individuals, with no reference to their actual or potential mothering, but also demands that social institutions, policies and practices accommodate the needs and interests of mothers. Feminists have seen that when social institutions, policies, and practices treat women and men equally, without consideration of women's actual or potential mothering, this can benefit women who are not mothers (and all or most men) and disadvantage mothers (and men who do take significant responsibility for caring for children). But when social institutions, policies, and practices do take the needs and interests of mothers (and child rearing men) into account, this may benefit mothers and disadvantage women who are not mothers and men who have no child rearing responsibilities.

These conflicting demands are explored in many of the chapters but there is no easy solution. Sara Ruddick, in a chapter entitled 'Maternal Thinking', looks forward to the day when men are willing and able to take an equal share in childrearing, and bell hooks in a chapter entitled 'Revolutionary Parenting' suggests a community-based responsibility for childrearing where men and women share equal responsibility for child care.

This is an academic book full of modern scholarship and ideas and is essential reading for all feminists.

[Obtainable from Demeter Press, c/o The Association for Research on Mothering, 726 Atkinson, York University, 4700 Keele St. Toronto, Canada, ON M3J 1P3. www.yorku.ca/arm]

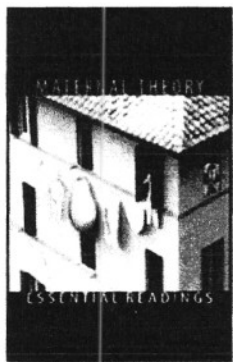
Catherine Rowland

Maternal Theory: Essential Readings

Andrea O'Reilly (ed)

Demeter Press

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The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) have launched a new publishing division, Demeter Press, the first book publisher focused specifically on the topic of motherhood/mothering. Theory on mothers,

mothering and motherhood has emerged as a distinct body of knowledge within feminist theory. This collection, *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*, edited by Andrea O'Reilly, Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University, Toronto, Canada, is the first ever anthology on maternal theory. It is large book (836 pages) covering three decades of scholarship, not to be read in one sitting, or even several sittings – but indispensable to anyone who is studying this subject or has an interest in Women's Studies.

The study of Feminist Theory gained momentum over the last century. Feminist Theory covers a wide variety of disciplines including economics, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, oppression, patriarchy etc. and among other things aims to understand the nature of inequality and to promote women's rights. Maternal Theory is now an established field within motherhood studies and feminist