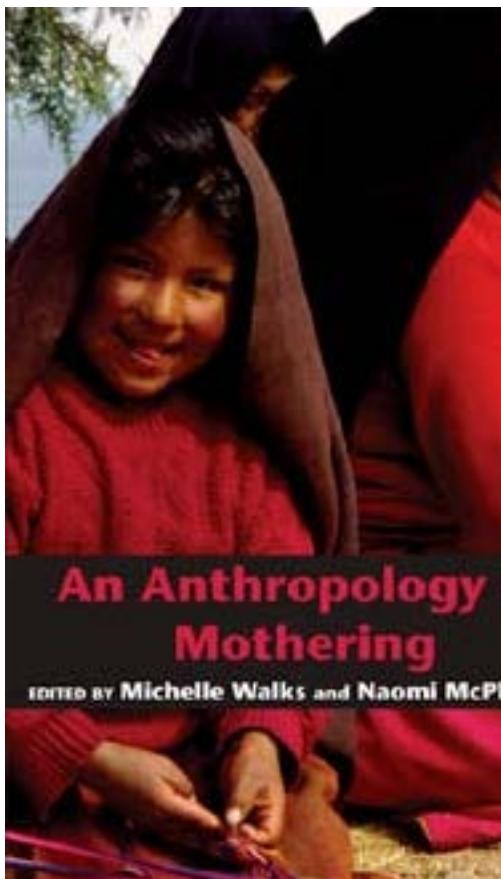


An Anthropology of Mothering

edited by Michelle Walks and Naomi McPherson



In anthropology, cross-cultural research is fundamental. In relation to “mothering,” cross-cultural research becomes enlightening, not only to understand the practices of so-called Others, but also to understanding ourselves. The Anthropology of Mothering has developed fairly unnoticed until the last couple of years, when an increase of research, attention, and respect has suddenly appeared. Geographically, this anthology focuses on places and populations from Canada, the United States, Central and South America, the South Pacific, Australia, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. The experiences and ideas represented within this volume are much more than geographically diverse, as Indigenous and immigrant, rural and urban, religious and secular populations are represented, as well as one chapter focused on primate and hominid mothering. Through the consideration of the experiences of grandmothers, au pairs, biological and adoptive mothers, mothers of soldiers, mothers of children with autism, mothers in the corrections system, among others, it becomes clear that human mothering is neither practiced nor experienced the same the world over – indeed, even a single definition of what “mothering” is cannot be formed by the contributors of this anthology. Instead, while ideas of ‘good’ mothering exist in every culture, the effects of colonialism and migration, as well as different understandings of and relationships to food, religion, and government play prominent among many other factors, including age, relationship status, and sexuality of mothers themselves, to affect what is understood as ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ mothering.

Michelle Walks, a PhD student at the University of British Columbia Okanagan, is passionate about queer issues, reproductive health, mothering, and feminist anthropology. Her work has been published in the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* (now the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*), and *Canadian Woman Studies*.

Naomi McPherson is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia Okanagan, in Kelowna., BC. Naomi is an established scholar, with extensive fieldwork experience in New Britain (Papua New Guinea), the author of *In Colonial New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, and is also the new Editor-in-Chief of *Anthropologica*.

“This outstanding collection focuses, for the first time ever, on women’s actual experiences of mothering, regardless of institutional involvement, biology, sex, and gender. It truly constitutes an anthropology of mothering, and thus is a ground-breaker—comprehensive, far-reaching beyond even gender, engaging, even fascinating—each chapter has its own charm—and its cross-cultural focus is invaluable. This marvelous book will make its readers think far beyond their culturally ingrained concepts of mothering and motherhood. It is a must-read for all scholars in the anthropology/sociology of reproduction and public health, and will benefit mothers themselves because of the broad and deep perspectives that it provides.”

—Robbie Davis-Floyd, Senior Research Fellow, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Texas Austin, author of *Birth as an American Rite of Passage*

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