

“politically active” midwifery-supporting mothers who chose homebirths were historically seen as “irresponsible, bad mothers” who did not know what was best for themselves or their children, who participated in “risky” behaviour—likened to drug addiction or “driving a car without brakes” (84)—and were thus maligned by state and medical officials. Conversely, these women saw themselves as acting altruistically on behalf of their communities. They believed themselves to be “good mothers” who were educated about birthing methods and whose choice of homebirth was at once rational and safe.

As Craven notes in one of her concluding statements, “the fight for women’s access to reproductive rights, including midwifery, must be waged within the context of a broader social and reproductive justice perspective ... not merely [as] individual claims to consumer rights” (147). Thus, while *Pushing for Midwives* focuses on the state of Virginia, it offers broad insight into the medicalization of reproduction, the “re-birth” of midwifery, and grassroots organizing among diverse populations that support midwifery. The book is a welcome and timely addition to mothering studies and the anthropology of reproduction.

Twenty-First Century Motherhood: Experience, Identity, Policy, Agency

Andrea O’Reilly, ed.
New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Reviewed by Stephanie Knaak

Twenty-First Century Motherhood studies “the impact of this new century on how motherhood is practiced and represented as experience, identity, policy, and agency” (3). The volume signals the coming-of-age of maternal scholarship. Not only does it highlight the breadth of this growing discipline, it also manages to strengthen its theoretical core. Each of this book’s twenty-three articles seeks—in unique ways—to engage and advance ideas that now serve as the foundation of maternal scholarship, key concepts and theories developed by thinkers such as Patricia Hill Collins, Susan Douglas, Sharon Hays, Meredith Michaels, Adrienne Rich, and Sara Ruddick.

The book is topical and covers a diverse range of subjects, including mothering transgendered children, mothering on the internet, cross-racial gestational surrogacy, daycare policies, mothering in South Africa in the context of HIV/AIDS, whether men can and do mother, breastfeeding in Kenya, the

representation of motherhood in film and popular literature, reproductive technologies, parenting in the age of risk, maternal activism, and mothering at the intersection of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and gender. Notably absent from this wide-ranging coverage is the subject of medicalization and motherhood/mothering. Also, with a couple of exceptions, the essays in this collection focus primarily on issues pertaining to the practice and representation of motherhood in Western societies.

What most impresses me about this book is its cohesiveness, given the range of topics covered. Editor Andrea O'Reilly is responsible for the work's overall structure: its thematic and theoretical coherence, sound organization, and helpful introduction. The volume's four main sections—experience, identity, policy, and agency—activate the distinct (yet inherently overlapping and interconnected) dimensions of motherhood. *Twenty-First Century Motherhood* is a useful resource for those interested or involved in motherhood studies. It is also suitable for use in undergraduate courses on gender, sexuality, and family, race and ethnicity, communications, political economy, and globalization.

The Joys of Motherhood, 2nd ed.

Buchi Emecheta.

Harlow: Heinemann, 2008.

Reviewed by Maki Motapanyane

First published in 1979, *The Joys of Motherhood* is a story of self-sacrifice and unrelenting toil that Buchi Emecheta depicts as definitive of African womanhood in early to mid-twentieth century Nigeria. The title is purposely ironic. In this eighteen chapter, second edition of the novel, readers are presented with a prototypical young Ibo woman, Nnu Ego, whose life of incessant work and suffering we follow to its unrewarding, lonely end. Set in Nigeria of the 1940s and 1950s, the novel forwards a feminist reading of the conventions of African womanhood and ponders what losses “good women” suffer in meeting these ascribed expectations. Emecheta controversially de-romanticizes the most esteemed illustration of African womanhood, the stoic mother. The picture painted for us is grim. We are first shown that African womanhood is defined by several factors: the marriage offer one is able to attract—including the quality of the husband, in part foretold by the bride price with which he