

political gesture, one that fosters a new way of thinking and acting in the world that debunks the pervasive push to “do it alone.” This book will be an inspiration to readers.

Mothers and Children

Chase, Susan E., and Mary F. Rogers.
New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Reviewed by Erika Horwitz

As a student and researcher, I always am searching for useful literature on the subject of mothers and mothering in Western society. *Mothers and Children* is an insightful book that reviews important topics about the social constructions of motherhood. Further, the authors seek to give voice to mothers themselves by including a series of narratives that illustrate their points.

In part one, “The Social Constructions of Motherhood,” Chase and Rogers suggest that ideologies and practices around mothering are historically and culturally specific. They point out that the current constructions of motherhood have a negative impact on mothers and their children. The authors examine feminist views about motherhood, the historical roots and impact of the social discourses of “good” versus “bad” mothers, and the subject of “father absence.” I was particularly impressed by their emphasis on the importance of fathers’ (or father figures’) loving participation in the lives of children and by their arguments against the notion that nuclear families are superior to other types of families. This section of the book offers an excellent summary of the dominant discourse on mothering and its impact on the lives of mothers and their children.

In part two, the authors explore the connection between women’s bodies and motherhood. They point out how social constructions of motherhood have led to a view of mothers as asexual and they emphasize the importance of reclaiming mothers as sexual and erotic beings. The authors also examine how mainstream medicine has shaped reproductive and birthing practices and they highlight the importance of choice. Part two concludes with an examination of the complexities of infertility and the medical technologies aimed at “helping” women to conceive.

Part three focuses on the topic of “Mothering in Everyday Life.” In discussing the actual experiences of mothers, the authors emphasize the importance of social change in supporting mothers and children. They discuss the relationships of mothers and children, “othermothering,” and mothering as political action. This last section in the book illustrates the struggles of contemporary mothers. It touches on the importance of involving others (“othermothering”) in raising children, not only for the benefit of mothers who

can then focus their attention on other matters, but for children who currently are growing up with limited adult connections on which to rely for nurturing and guidance. The authors also discuss mothers as social activists.

Most important, *Mothers and Children* gives voice to mothers. Jeannine O. Howitz, for example, who considers herself a feminist mother, provides the reader with a compelling message: mothers' work is work. Through her narrative, we glimpse the struggles of a mother who is trying to make sense of (and survive) the social constructions of motherhood that contradict her views and experience. This book is inspiring and educational at a deep level.

The New Midwifery: Science and Sensitivity in Practice

Page, Lesley Ann, ed.
Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 2000.

Reviewed by Christine Brook

This outstanding book builds on Lesley Page's previous contributions in the fields of continuity of care, evidence based practice, and the humanization of maternity services. Written for midwives and midwifery students, the book addresses issues which will enable midwives to develop woman-centred practice and to practice with increased autonomy, in keeping with changes to maternity services being demanded by childbearing women in many parts of the industrialized world.

The book contains three sections: effective and appropriate care; transition to parenting; and adaptation and growth in pregnancy, birth and early life. The first section covers evidence based practice in the context of sensitive midwifery practice. The marrying of the humanization of midwifery practice with the scientific evidence for practice creates a wonderful juncture of the art and science of midwifery practice, contextualizing the professional need for scientific reasoning within the context of humanistic care. The second section focuses on the transition to parenting, in particular the social and emotional experiences of childbearing women and their families, and midwifery practices that can support and promote healthy adaptation. The third section focuses on the physiology of childbearing and midwifery practices to support early parenting.

Throughout the book the primacy of the relationship between childbearing women and their midwives is recognized. This relationship can contribute towards enabling women to meet their needs and have a satisfactory, indeed life enhancing experience of childbearing and maternity care. A good relationship is not sufficient on its own, however, and the professional responsibility of midwives to maintain their scientific knowledge base is emphasized at all times.