

[PDF] The Mommy Myth: The Idealization Of Motherhood And How It Has Undermined All Women

Susan Douglas, Meredith Michaels - pdf download free book

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Author: Susan Douglas, Meredith Mich

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Description:

Does Martha Stewart make you feel like you never do enough for your kids? Do "celebrity mom" profiles leave you feeling lumpen and inadequate? That's because they're supposed to, say Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels, authors of *The Mommy Myth* and self-professed "mothers with an attitude." Both scathing and self-deprecating, their pop-culture critique takes on "the new momism," the media's obsession with motherhood and the impossible standards which that obsession promotes. Today's ideal mom makes June Cleaver seem like a layabout: she may work outside the home, but never *too* much, always looks at the world through her children's eyes, makes sure to buy

only educational, age-appropriate toys, and includes a loving note with each hand-prepared lunch. Meanwhile, the news media hype stories about child abduction, politicians excoriate so-called "welfare queens," and parenting experts advocate wearing your child in a sling until he moves out on his own. Romanticized, commercialized, sensationalized, and demonized by turns, today's mothers are damned if they work and damned if they don't; what's more, the idea that the government might do something to help their plight has come to seem almost quaint. As a history of motherhood in the media from 1970 to the present, *The Mommy Myth* makes a fun and thought-provoking read. Yet close readings of episodes of *thirtysomething* don't create quite the call to arms the authors seem to have in mind; no woman likes to think of herself as a media dupe, particularly the kind of woman who will be reading this book. Straightforward policy critiques like their chilling chapter on childcare fare much better, illuminating a culture that seems to have forgotten public institutions' power to correct social ills. --Mary Park

From Publishers Weekly In the idealized myth, mothers and babies spend their days discovering the wonders of life, reading, playing and laughing. Mom wears her baby in a sling, never raises her voice and of course has unlimited time and patience. Baby grows up safe, happy and respectful. In real life, however, it's a different story. Douglas (Where the Girls Are) and Smith College philosophy professor Michaels, "mothers with an attitude problem," blow the lid off "new momism," "a set of ideals... that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection that are beyond [a mother's] reach." The authors examine the past 30 years of television, radio, movies, magazines and advertising to show that the bar has been increasingly raised for "the standards of good motherhood while singling out and condemning those we were supposed to see as dreadful mothers" (notably harried working mothers). Using ample humor (e.g., buy the wrong toys and your child will "end up a semiliterate counter girl in Dunkin' Donuts for life"), abundant examples and an approachable style, Douglas and Michaels incriminate not just Republican administrations and Dr. Laura, but also celebrity mothers, Drs. Spock and the evening news. While the authors are occasionally repetitive and sometimes condescend to moms who stay at home, their thought-provoking, accessible foray critiquing new momism will be of interest to liberal mothers-and possibly fathers-helping them to judge the media's images of motherhood with a more critical eye.

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