Reanalyze Motherhood in Tillie Olsen's, *I Stand Here Ironing*

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Abstract

The theme of motherhood remains unconcluded to date. Opposing views are recurrent even within the feminist discourse. Minimal research exists on the postmodernist interpretation of Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* and others similar to it in regard to the concept of motherhood. The present study aims to enlighten on the multifaceted nature of the concept and encourage more scholars to engage in the discussion of the text and extend to others for rich revelations concerning the concept of motherhood. The study utilizes the textual analysis method to enable close reading of Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* to unravel the prescriptions of motherhood as advocated for in culture. Textual analysis facilitates an intimate engagement with the thoughts, arguments, and postulations present in Olsen's authorship. The analysis has enabled the interrogation of the numerous positions that Olsen gives her readers.

The study has introduced new insights to expand the scholarship on the concept of motherhood through the discussion of motherhood as a source of life and power. Olsen's short story reflects the present predicaments women continue to face across the globe, especially in the third world nations. Women always find themselves at a crossroads where it appears they have to choose family or professional life. Motherhood is an important component in the creation of the female identity and hence has become increasingly inexorable to advance the concept. Choices and circumstances have empowered women to change the concept of motherhood. Unlike in the past, there is no explicit imposed definition. Subsequently, research on motherhood is far-reaching and fractured.

Keywords: motherhood, feminism, culture, power, identity, family

1. Introduction

The essence of life is identifying what is worth pursuing, which will bring forth the tranquility we all so keenly chase. The family unit is expected to offer solace and a safe haven where all members feel appreciated and loved. Particularly, the children entirely depend on their parents to provide an amiable environment to grow up in as that directly correlates to their future experiences. The family is the space where all problems, regardless of their nature and intensity are tackled, and solutions arrived at, or a way forward provided. Such a scenario is only possible when all members engage with love, care, and rationality. Nonetheless, extenuating circumstances often seem to strain relations and ultimately terminate them. The case of the narrator's child, Emily, underscores this phenomenon explicitly.

1.1 Background Information

The postmodernist approach advocates for multiple narratives. There are no shared experiences; hence, generalizations are an injustice to human existence. Postmodernist's champion individual responses to issues and thus oppose prescribed ways of reading stories. Every individual is unique and subsequently holds an interpretation that varies from everyone else regardless of similarity in regard to gender, status, or educational level, among other distinguishing parameters. The beauty of focusing on individual interpretation is that it becomes feasible to simulate our own world through perception and explore practical solutions to our personal problems. Reality is largely unreliable, and compelling groups to accustom to prescribed ways of operations is unfair. The dubious nature of the environment calls for an open-minded society that gives autonomy to its members to become the drivers of their own lives with no prejudice.

Additionally, postmodernism explores the novel uncertainties regarding human nature and an individual's powerlessness in directing the path of life at an individual and communal level. Ultimately, individuals develop a

void that appears humanly impossible to fill, as is evident in the life of Emily, the narrator's daughter. It is on this backdrop that the present article is pegged on. Olsen's, *I Stand Here Ironing*, is an exemplary portrayal of the cruel realities of family life that the female species has to condone in society. The popularity of the perpetuated proposition that women are courageous and endowed with adequate strength to brave any situation is a fallacy that fails to acknowledge that shared realities are inaccurate. There only exists interpretation. Interpretation has to be discerned from an individual's world view. Only then can individuals believe in their individual initiative to deal with their challenges and ultimately attain contentment.

The narrator struggles with the thoughts of how she has destroyed her daughter's life as her mother. Motherhood goes beyond the biological process of reproduction as advanced by some feminists such as Neyer and Bernardi (2011). It is a state that is not only the wellspring of life but a constant source of replenishment for all members of society. All people depend on motherhood to be nurtured into existence and also through childhood. Following that, mothers need to be endowed with immense physical, financial and emotional strength to manage such a responsibility. Thus, rather than developing feelings of inadequacy and guilt as the narrator, mothers need to acknowledge their role in the continuity of the human race and acquire contentment with their current state as they strive to perform better in future.

Largely, society is to blame for the narrator's perspective due to the propagated notion of shared reality. Society expects women to be perfect in all they engage in, be the best caregiver for all their children in equal measure, care for the husband, and ensure that the household's finances are in check to cater to all needs of all the members. These unrealistic expectations explain why the narrator becomes frustrated on realizing that she has failed as a mother. However, the bar of measurement of this "failure" is not objective as everything is tied to the life of her child Emily. The struggles she had to go through juggling between working and nursing her baby and the stress of separation from the husband are not insisted enough. This is a fundamental reason why the single interpretation of phenomena should be privileged over shared reality. The narrator's state would have been much better if only she had been given an opportunity to act in the best way given her tough circumstances. A postmodernist perspective of the narrator's experience would embrace the challenges and outcomes of her experience rather than faulting what she should or should not have done. Individual interpretation is the path to follow for the realization of complete and fulfilling experiences.

The inability to associate postmodernism with tangibility is one of its exciting aspects but also a factor for ambiguity in the enigmatic world. Subsequently, the postmodernism concept has bred and nurtured accelerated paranoia and increased doubt about prescribed meaning in reality. Postmodernists presume that on no account has order ever existed (Boyne, Roy, & Ali Rattansi, 2017). As such, the pursuit of establishing order is the sole reason for the emergence of pandemonium. Subsequently, the nostalgia held by modernists regarding the transformations compelled by the World Wars that annihilated equilibrium is unviable because there was no equipoise to begin with. In any case, these wars aided in making explicit the notion that chaos rules humanity. The turmoil that characterizes human experience on all fronts is supposed to be the understructure that knits human existence.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The theme of motherhood remains unconcluded to date. Surprisingly, opposing arguments persist even within the feminist sphere (Aksehir & Şaşman-Kaylı, 2021). Numerous studies on motherhood have advanced distinctive discussions of the concept and subsequently presented varied stances guided by the approaches adopted by the scholars as highlighted by the studies of Neyer and Bernardi (2011), Kawash (2011), Kaplan (2013), Aksehir and Şaşman-Kaylı, among others. The present scholarship holds that embracing interpretation that leads to the generation of multiple narratives is a probable way forward to attaining consensus in future. Rather than viewing the perceptions as opposing, the academe could instead acknowledge the multifaceted nature concerning the motherhood concept, given the several conceptualizations that have been formulated.

The current research redefines motherhood further, thereby accentuating the need for acceptance of independent interpretations. Such interpretations can be utilized to read texts that will facilitate unraveling new propositions. The study adds to the corpus of knowledge regarding the new directions of research that the concept of motherhood will always trigger. It employs the postmodernist approach that favors inclusivity and questions shared reality. The approach advocates for interpretation as a strategy to ensure all stances are considered rather than subjecting societies to acceptance of shared reality.

1.3 Knowledge Gap

Minimal research exists on the postmodernist interpretation of Tillie Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* and others similar to it in regard to the concept of motherhood. The present study aims to create cognizance of the

multifaceted nature of the concept and encourage more scholars to engage in the discussion of the text and extend to others for rich revelations concerning the concept of motherhood.

1.4 Study Aims

The study aims at introducing new insights to expand the scholarship on the concept of motherhood. It purposes to:

- Discuss motherhood as a source of life.

- Demonstrate how motherhood is a source of power.

- Explain the significance of embracing a single interpretation of phenomena rather than adherence to a shared reality.

2. Relevant Literature

Motherhood is an important component in the creation of the female identity. It has become increasingly inexorable to advance the concept of motherhood, given the dominant presence of the masculine ideology (Aksehir & Şaşman-Kaylı, 2021). Consequently, probing literary works to unravel the representations of motherhood is ineluctable to shed more light regarding the concept. The discussion of the depictions of motherhood in literary works is of the essence based on the fact that most tendentious discourses are found there. Further, the topic of motherhood remains debatable to date. Opposing views are recurrent even within the feminist discourse. Atasu (2021) approaches her argument by undermining the traditional motherhood concept. In advancing her argument, she utilizes this traditional notion as a tool for construing and reconstructing the masculine ideology. Correspondingly, she attempts to present motherhood in a completely different perspective that acknowledges the significance that motherhood should be accorded. Atasu presents motherhood in its own right rather than the traditional way; it has always been viewed as juxtaposed to the masculine ideology. Such a reconstruction is important as motherhood is a central tenet in the formation of female identity.

On the other hand, Kaplan (2013) has fostered the discussion on motherhood as an institution and social discourse. As Kaplan explains, ruling discourses and institutions hinder smooth relationships, requiring a "third" to intervene on the mother-daughter dyad. That scenario makes the life of a mother cumbersome and scars a child's experience. Kaplan talks about her daughter's pain because of the individual(s) who had to intervene regularly. She acknowledges that the scenario may have negatively impacted her daughter's life in ways she may never fathom. That is why she explicitly states that she cannot speak on behalf of her daughter. These ruling institutions prescribe the nature of relationships and thus deny individuals the autonomy of their unions. That becomes even harder due to a lack of supporting systems to help those willing to venture into such "territories" like Kaplan and the narrator.

Kaplan admits that the damage children undergo results in pain that never fades, and the only way out is to attempt to work through it as she has done with her daughter overtime which has realized unimpressive results. This experience reiterates that of the narrator, who is attempting to mend the damage on Emily that she is blamed for causing during her daughter's childhood. Just like Kaplan, the results are unsatisfactory and very gradual. Society does not make it any easier for either individual who is left to deal with their situations in whatever way they will. Interestingly, they are still blamed for taking their chosen paths, yet no one or institution offered assistance. There is a need to work on representation in society as it is as accurate as reality to most people.

Representation is an important phenomenon as its end product gradually becomes equivalent to society's dominant ideology. Transition to motherhood has never been easy, as affirmed by many women. Motherhood has been associated with struggles and hardships that lead to isolation, loneliness, and a feeling of exhaustion and emptiness that often leads to mental problems (Emmanuel & St John, 2010). It is even worse when mothers have to separate from their children at tender ages due to financial obligations. At eight months, the narrator has to leave Emily with the neighbor to work. She describes how Emily would cry on spotting her every evening as she rushed back to her. Both mother and baby are desperate to spend quality time, but extraneous variables cannot allow that to happen. Following that, the emotional health of both is severely affected, which explains the personality that Emily acquires eventually. Unfortunately, Emily's fate appears sealed as she bears the consequence of the situation more than the narrator, who has three other chances to become a better mother. Emily has only one childhood phase and hence damage that occurred during the time is almost impossible to repair, as reflected in her teenage life.

3. Proposed Solution

Interpretation rather than shared reality should be invigorated. The preference for individual interpretation results

in the generation of multiple narratives that cater to audiences' unique needs. Subsequently, that should be fronted in the reading of texts. In this way, the human experience will become meaningful for all participants regardless of their different situations. The narrator experiences a feeling of emptiness that seems immensurable. She has no sense of control either as a mother or a wife that causes her life to become meaningless. She questions why she is expected to have all the answers pertaining to her daughter's situation simply because she is her mother. That is an expectation of society. It is implied that the bond mothers have with their children is intensely strong. Subsequently, a "good mother" holds all the answers to the predicaments their children face. Mothers should also be capable of anticipating underlying issues that may be incomprehensible to others. Notably, fathers are exempted from such expectations. Even though the narrator has a role to play in the situation, as noted by a neighbor who advises her to smile often, the huge responsibility inflicted upon mothers causes her to resent her inability to cater for Emily's needs, particularly that of affection. The narrator wonders whether she will succeed in helping Emily to eventually warm her heart and open up to her as a mother and to the world instead of maintaining her somber nature.

4. Methods

The study utilizes the textual analysis method to enable close reading of Olsen's *I Stand Here Ironing* to unravel the prescriptions of motherhood as advocated for in culture. Textual analysis facilitates an intimate engagement with the thoughts, arguments, and postulations present in Olsen's authorship. To some extent, it has enabled the disambiguation of the thoughts on motherhood and, in so doing, limited the emergence of more presuppositions concerning the embodiment of motherhood. The possible interpretations that can be generated from Olsen's narrative are abounding. This methodology enabled comprehension of the language used that resulted in the acquisition of knowledge on how individuals make sense of motherhood and how it impacts them and others around them.

The textual analysis also allows one to illuminate context that is crucial in enhancing the quality of discussion (Belsey, 2013). It highlights the backdrop on which an author wrote a text and how that impacted the final product. Subsequently, that provides justification of the opinions and resultant position that a scholar takes upon reading a text. The context illuminates the essence of extraneous variables and the extent to which they influence a text, notwithstanding their irrelevance to the topic of discussion. In the present case, Olsen writes during the Great Depression and Cold War epoch permeated by disillusionment, fear, and uncertainty that is a perfect representation of the turmoil that mothers face as they battle to create equilibrium between their financial pursuit and family responsibilities. The environment they have to operate in is often hostile.

The textual analysis enabled the interrogation of the numerous positions that Olsen gives her readers. For instance, several questions emerge during a close reading of the text:

➢ Do we view the narrator as a negligent and selfish mother? Or is she an epitome of what motherhood should be in the worst of circumstances?

➢ How should Emily deal with her struggles as she matures? Should she emulate her mother's ways or modify them, and why?

➢ Is her detached relation with her mother justified?

➢ How should we treat the narrator's first husband?

➢ Is the second husband any better? Or is he also dependent on the power of motherhood to sustain him?

➢ Is there hope for working mothers in their pursuit of attaining career progression parallel to nurturing the young ones?

These, among many other questions, traverse the mind as one engages with the characters' experiences in the short story. Textual analysis favors an in-depth exploration of themes and styles utilized by authors in their quest to communicate their concerns, desires, and wants to their audiences. To some extent, Olsen allows the text to calibrate the agenda that empowers future researchers to engender intuitions predominant in the augmentation of themes present in her text.

Further, the methodology enabled my research to interpret the text explicitly. The analysis guides readers through a clearly thought-out assessment of the text that elaborates on the perceptions advocated for by the researcher. For instance, the study argues that motherhood is a source of power against the narrator's presentation as battling with uncontrollable forces that have left her with absolutely no choice but to keep on "ironing." Other than focusing on her woes as a mother as illuminated by Emily's struggles, my analysis presents the narrator as an embodiment of motherhood in onerous circumstances that would compel any other person to take the direction

as that of the narrator or even resign to fate. Thus, the narrator's perseverance and will to move on is a strength that both husbands do not exhibit. Following that, it is logical to argue that this will power helps Emily forge ahead despite her arduous experiences at every juncture of her life.

5. Results

Choices and circumstances have empowered women to change the concept of motherhood. Unlike in the past, there is no explicit imposed definition. Similar to the transformations witnessed in the economic, political, social, and cultural arena, women have also modified mothering concepts to suit individual situations. Motherhood scholarship should serve as a mirror that guides women to make connections in relation to their individual situations rather than juxtaposing their circumstances to the generally shared reality that may have little or no significance at all to theirs. Individual interpretation and relation should be essential factors that guide research on motherhood and mothering. The multiplicity of maternal patterns should be celebrated.

Women of all ages, races, educational levels, culture and abilities should provide a support base for one another so that they all act as change catalysts rather than adhere to the prescribed cultural role that forces them to be agents of transmitting the dominant culture; particularly that which makes mothers vulnerable to discrimination. Women can encourage and support one another to recognize the importance of their role in society and thus redefine themselves as powerful and free "elements" who will strive to dismantle stereotypical frameworks. The female species can bring about change whilst being aware that mothering provides them with a unique opportunity and privilege that makes them powerful and authoritative. Women should not perceive themselves as expendable. On the contrary, they should lobby for changes to facilitate their emancipation and thus end their isolation while corroborating their collective voices (Abbey & O'Reilly, 1998).

Olsen's short story reflects the present predicaments women continue to face across the globe, especially in the third world nations. Women always find themselves at crossroads where it appears they have to choose either family or professional life. In most instances, a choice has to be made, and due to the fear of judgement by society, most women nurture families at the expense of their careers. On the other hand, those who struggle to maneuver between both roles end up frustrated and lonely as the narrator. Rather than being commended for her bravery and resilience as she struggles to nurture Emily and provide for her, she is viewed as a mother responsible for her daughter's struggles. One wonders what course of action she was expected to take. If she would have chosen to stay at home and nurse her baby, both would have probably resorted to begging for their daily provisions.

However, regardless of society's big role in confining women to a corner, emancipation should begin at an individual level. The narrator laments how "she stands there ironing," implying that there is no way out for her. Her tone is miserable and resigned. She accepts that she is largely responsible for Emily's troubles. If the narrator decided to take control of the situation by standing her ground; that she adopted the best possible route given the prevailing conditions at the time, then both mother and daughter would have had a better chance of mending their relationship and forging the way forward rather than allowing the society to control all aspects of their lives including their feelings. The "how to" by society is the genesis of most challenges women deal with.

Subsequently, it is wise to encourage the multiplicity of realities rather than compelling individuals to partake of the shared reality. Every circumstance is different and will therefore breed a unique experience. Regardless of the level of congruence, situations should never be generalized as that forces adherence that often results in pain and suffering, which eventually lowers self-esteem. Women in such scenarios begin to doubt their ability to overcome hurdles and thus decide to follow what is expected of them regardless of whether that is good for them or not. The narrator is among the few women who brave their situations but still have to deal with the psychological torture and anguish accompanying their choices, as witnessed by the narrator's experience.

6. Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Motherhood as a Source of Life

Motherhood is a source of life as women are responsible for the childbearing process and nurturing the little ones. It is a duty that cannot be avoided. On the other hand, the men can choose to be part of or neglect their responsibilities as the narrator's husband does. He abandons the family under the pretext of poverty, yet he is supposed to be the head that provides and shields the family from any turbulence. He is supposed to offer solace and security to family members at all times. The narrator's husband behaves in the exact opposite of what is expected. Society is not as harsh on men as it is on women who abandon their parental responsibility. Motherhood and reproduction have been highly contested concepts even within the feminists' movements due to the varied perceptions and reasoning that emerge from the concepts.

The contestation lies in the fact that the concept of motherhood can be an element that unites women and can be

used to deny women their rights and discriminate against them. It is insinuated that the narrator is irresponsible and a failure because of the state of Emily, yet the blame should largely be placed on the dad. The latter abandoned his family and forced the narrator to assume both roles. Due to this realization, the prevailing feminist discourse during the mid-1980s adopted an analytical approach to motherhood. It was deemed necessary to deal with the subordination and discrimination coupled with inequality (de Beauvoir 1953, p. 525). She rejected the notion that it is through childbearing that women could attain equality with men. On the contrary, being a mother caused women to be incorporated in the category of "others" and thus limiting them to remain in that union out of obligation rather than choice.

Therefore, the socialization of motherhood as the essence of a woman's life was the basis for discrimination and subordination. All women are coerced to become mothers whether they are willing or not, as that was the only sure way to fulfill their destinies. It was a construction that was construed from many angles, such as social, historical, political, and even legal, to ensure that it was a full-proof system (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165). Subsequently, there was no autonomy in motherhood. In opposition, it was an entity that was self-destructing and acted as a hindrance to the progression of women. The narrator works so hard to provide for Emily and ensure that she does not end up in depression due to poverty and the loss of her husband that was deemed a big failure in those days. In the end, she is blamed for the poor state of Emily's health and social life.

Additionally, motherhood ensured the "containment" of women. The tradition has deepened its roots to the extent that women feel inadequate without children regardless of their capacity to have or not have them. It has become the norm to associate motherhood and its troubles with fulfilment. Women become immersed in their nurturing duties that they retire to oblivion with the perception that it is a service to their babies and society. Unfortunately, society still twists that and finds a reason to blame women for the challenges that emerge with babies and husbands.

Apparently, mothers not only give life from the biological viewpoint but also provide a source of unending strength, comfort, and tranquility that is hard to come by in the real world. Regardless of her weaknesses, the narrator struggles to ensure that she fends for her baby Emily even after being abandoned by her husband. She goes to work and leaves baby Emily at nine months. We can relate to her struggles as a mother who wants to care for her offspring but still has to provide. It is disheartening when the baby cries every evening when it sees the mother. The bond that the two share is impressive, and it is hard to comprehend how the two completely drift apart later on. That can be partly tied to the narrator's inability to conceal her emotions from Emily and the society that burdens mothers with burdens that are often cumbersome to shoulder.

Thus, the long-standing interpretation of motherhood is a misguided assertion aimed at incarcerating women to accept their position and, in so doing, aid in the creation of order that societies strive to establish, unheeding to the fact that order is hypothetical. That expectation is to blame for the narrator's struggles. The focus on the unfortunate state of the narrator's daughter Emily coupled with the bad relationship between mother and daughter is bewildering. The narrator struggles with all odds to ensure that she sustains her family regardless of the high level of poverty. Unexpectedly, the husband who is supposed to be the protector and "strong sex" is the one who leaves to seek solace elsewhere, leaving the burden to the wife to support the family. Rather than glorifying the actions of the narrator, she is blamed for Emily's state. It is presumed that due to the lack of total attention, care, and love from the mother during her childhood, she has become this frail child with low self-esteem.

6.2 Motherhood as a Source of Power

Motherhood is a source of power, a fuel that drives women to go to all extents to cater to their children's needs despite the pressure by uncontrollable forces to quit. The story is narrated against the background of the Great Depression epoch when humanity witnessed the worst of circumstances. The ensuing fear due to the Cold War extinguished all hope and faith of normalcy for humanity ever again. As a single mother in such an environment, the narrator had to prioritize making money over family relations, hence explaining why Emily had a lonely childhood. That was not an easy decision to make, as noted through her individual frustrations of reluctantly delegating the responsibility to other parties.

Nonetheless, the narrator still demonstrates this fact by the narrator's ceaseless ironing; "I stand here ironing… moves tormented back and forth with the iron" (p. 2). In as much as the narrator makes mistakes as is made explicit by the social worker, "you should smile more to Emily," Emily's father's role in contributing to her current state is disregarded. Despite the tough situation, the narrator struggled with raising Emily against all odds; that is what motherhood entails. A mother's responsibility is to ensure that her children make it to adulthood. Her struggles and determination demonstrate the power of motherhood. It is what empowered her to soldier on even

after her husband left the family.

The chaos that stamps our daily interactions should neither be viewed in a negative light nor forced to subside as soon as it emerges. On the contrary, chaos and resultant strain should be accepted as normal human experiences. In the narrator's case, she should view her experience with Emily as important as it helped her become a better mother with the other children who do not have problems like just like Emily. Rather than being condemned and faulted for the way she nurtured Emily; which in any case was imposed as she had no other choice at the time, her experience should be perceived as part of an important component in designing a framework that will help aspiring and future mothers who are also career women. Life is easier when there are many angles of scrutinizing an issue in society.

6.3 Single Interpretation of Phenomena

Postmodernism is a champion of questioning the conventional ways that have always appeared to be the right course of action. Society has put in place systems that compel people to act in specified ways regardless of their choices. These frameworks can be said to be the creator of problems that the societal systems purport to solve. The scenario can be likened to a vicious cycle where the same system that creates challenges is still the one relied upon to generate solutions. That has been the case, and the outcome cannot be celebrated. Therefore, rather than coercing people to subscribe to the principle of shared reality, individuals should be encouraged to be accommodative, patient, and tolerant of others guided by the understanding that individuals are unique and have varied experiences. The focus on creating and maintaining order is an exercise in futility as human existence thrives on chaos.

Hence, instead of attempting to force peace, we should celebrate chaos and find a way of helping individuals deal with the different types of chaos they have to face during different epochs. There are as many perspectives to an issue as there are different appearances. Even siblings look different and often have very different stances, yet they are linked by blood ties. That is sufficient proof that it will always be a fallacy to assume that people's different experiences have one solution. Thus, different world views that translate to distinct approaches to solving problems should be celebrated. Motherhood is a diverse concept that necessitates the giving of freedom to women to decide on the best way of becoming mothers without having to give up professional progression or getting stressed and frustrated.

7. Conclusion

The scholarship on motherhood and related aspects will keep taking new directions due to the diversity in thinking that various scholars can adopt, whether within the Feminist movement or critics. Scholars and activists have discoursed about mothers and the act of bringing forth children in distinct genres coupled with an extensive range of disciplinary and theoretical approaches. Research on motherhood is far-reaching and fractured (Kawash, 2011). Nonetheless, it is feasible to address the particularity and specificity of motherhood while embracing multiple interpretations rather than submission to the idea of a rigid or important element of maternal experience, hankering or individualism. It is evident that, largely, feminism discourse has overlooked and neglected mothers "as mothers" and the study of motherhood in its entirety. Following that, it is crucial that academic feminists seriously consider the essence of incorporating motherhood in an extensive feminist movement. That will address the gap in such studies, facilitate the attainment of a more wholesome experience for mothers in their mothering experience, and generally help women decide whether or not to become mothers.

Advancing professionalism or career progression should not be viewed as a hindrance to becoming a good mother. Additionally, career women should not feel subjected or marginalized when they decide to set sometime away from their studies and careers to become mothers. Motherhood is as multifaceted as the different scholarships that address it, from academic research to films including: *The Business of Being Born* (2008); *Everybody loves Raymond* (1996–2005), *The Myth of the Perfect Mother*, and *Perfect Madness* among others. Feminist impulses should not cause anxiety among women who want to become mothers but are scared of what the world might think about them or the loneliness and a diminished sense of self they might undergo as a result of the process. Instead, feminist studies should portray motherhood as more of an "open book" where women have the autonomy to craft their path rather than adhere to a prescribed way of undergoing the motherhood process.

On the one hand, there are restrictions placed by society that influence the choice of being a mother, such as age, income, position, education, and race. On the other hand, regardless of the above-mentioned factors, there are some realities regarding motherhood that women need to be enlightened on, such as reduced autonomy, financial security, and leisure among other core aspects. These are serious issues that feminist studies should address exhaustively. There is a need for an advanced probe on motherhood as both an experience and an institution.

Works such as Adrienne's *Of Woman Born*; Unmansky's *Motherhood Reconceived* and Hays's *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* provide rich and vast insights on the motherhood concept whose interpretations can never be exhausted. On the contrary, they can be utilized by both scholars and activists to help mothers comprehend motherhood and its challenges with minimal or no bias. An effective model can be designed to facilitate understanding the ideology of rigorous mothering, the corpus of belief, advice, and system that constantly shape modern expectations of motherhood.

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