



The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women

Susan Douglas, Meredith Michaels

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Susan Douglas first took on the media's misrepresentation of women in her funny, scathing social commentary *Where the Girls Are*. Now, she and Meredith Michaels, have turned a sardonic (but never jaundiced) eye toward the cult of the new momism: a trend in American culture that is causing women to feel that only through the perfection of motherhood can true contentment be found. This vision of motherhood is highly romanticized and yet its standards for success remain forever out of reach, no matter how hard women may try to "have it all."

The Mommy Myth takes a provocative tour through the past thirty years of media images about mothers: the superficial achievements of the celebrity mom, the news media's sensational coverage of dangerous day care, the staging of the "mommy wars" between working mothers and stay-at-home moms, and the onslaught of values-based marketing that raises mothering standards to impossible levels, just to name a few. In concert with this messaging, the authors contend, is a conservative backwater of talking heads propagating the myth of the modern mom.

This nimble assessment of how motherhood has been shaped by out-of-date mores is not about whether women should have children or not, or about whether once they have kids mothers should work or stay at home. It is about how no matter what they do or how hard they try, women will never achieve the promised nirvana of idealized mothering. Douglas and Michaels skillfully map the distance traveled from the days when *The Feminine Mystique* demanded more for women than the unpaid labor of keeping house and raising children, to today's not-so-subtle pressure to reverse this thirty-year trend. A must-read for every woman.

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