Cultural conceptions of motherhood and its relation to childcare policy in Canada [1]

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Abstract

Motherhood has been a much discussed area of scholarly debate, particularly since second-wave feminists sought to abolish the reproductive essentialism of women's roles. Second-wave feminists argued that women must be "freed from the tyranny of their biology by any means available," and thus, by rejecting their roles as mothers, women can be free from the private sphere.1 Since then, theorists have proposed alternative solutions to liberating women from maternal oppression. Prominent scholar in Canadian childcare policy, Martha Friendly, argues that society has constructed a false narrative that "women's priorities are everyone's priorities", while subjecting them to inadequate childcare policies and infrastructure.2 Motherhood theorists Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Hays analyze the ways in which patriarchal discourse has contributed to women's internalization of maternal roles and expectations. Additionally, Sara Ruddick argues that it is possible to address the social constructivism of gendered essentialism through language use, which can be understood by hegemonic society.

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