

Encyclopedia of Motherhood

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SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
33 Pekin Street #02-01
Far East Square
Singapore 048763

Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Encyclopedia of motherhood / Andrea O'Reilly, general editor.
v. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-6846-1 (pbk.)

1. Motherhood--Encyclopedias. I. O'Reilly, Andrea, 1961-
HQ759.E52 2010

306.874'303--dc22

2009047934

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Photo Credits: Page 1428.

10 11 12 13 14 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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philosophy, and science. Da Vinci's contributions to the arts and sciences are well known, and he is considered to be one of the greatest painters of all time. Two of his works, *The Last Supper* and *Mona Lisa*, are among the most famous paintings ever produced, and both have been reproduced and parodied extensively. Da Vinci's notoriety and subsequent fame resulted in part because of the diversity of his interests and the vigor with which he pursued them, in addition to his genius. For instance, although he was a vegetarian, and his love for animals was legendary, he also invented war machines and dissected cadavers to understand human anatomy.

Mystery of Da Vinci's Birth

The relatively recent findings in the late 1990s and early 2000s by Italian researchers regarding the circumstances of Da Vinci's birth have challenged long-held assumptions about his origins. Papers discovered by the Museo Ideale Leonardo Da Vinci (Leonardo Da Vinci Ideal Museum), in the artist's hometown of Vinci, in Tuscany, coupled with 25 years of extensive research, resulted in the museum's assertion that Da Vinci's mother was not, after all, an Italian peasant as was believed for so many years.

While it is known that Da Vinci was born in Vinci, in Florence, Italy, on April 15, 1452, as the illegitimate son of the notary Piero da Vinci and a woman named Caterina, it is now disputed that Caterina was a local peasant. Rather, Da Vinci's father, Piero, is believed to have met Caterina through a friend who acquired her as a slave. In a tax record dating from 1457, when Leonardo was 5 years old, Leonardo's mother was identified as Caterina, at that time married to a man named Acchatabriga di Piero del Vaccha.

Researchers have said there is no other Caterina in Vinci or nearby villages who could be linked to Piero, Leonardo's father, other than the woman who lived in the house of Vanni di Niccolo di Ser Vanni, a wealthy friend of Piero. Researchers have also claimed that Da Vinci's father, Piero, owned a slave called Caterina.

During the time of the Renaissance, a period of cultural rebirth that began in Italy in the 14th century and continued through the 16th, it was common for Florentines to take slaves from the Middle

East and the Balkans. At the time of Leonardo da Vinci's birth, there were more than 500 slaves in Florence. Female slaves were commonly baptized and renamed, and the most popular names were Maria, Marta, and Caterina. While none of the evidence suggesting Caterina's Arabic background is definitive, it is highly suggestive of an alternative story. Further evidence of an Arabic lineage is suggested by a fingerprint analysis conducted using Da Vinci's notebooks and drawings, which were prolific. The patterns and ridges in Da Vinci's fingertips suggested a possible Middle Eastern heritage.

At age 60, and after the death of her husband, Caterina moved to Milan, where Leonardo was then living. Mother and son developed a relationship and continued to communicate by letter. These letters, contained in collections called the *Codex Atlanticus* and *Codex Forster II*, contain clues to Caterina's role in her son Leonardo's life, including suggestions of a Middle Eastern influence on Leonardo's work.

See Also: Art and Mothering; Italy; Columbus, Christopher; Mother of; Slavery and Mothering.

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Daycare

Daycare is the provision of care for a child through either a daycare center (nursery) or family-run, home daycare. Daycare differs from individual childcare by babysitters or nannies in that providers care for several children at one time. Daycare is typically

used by working parents to care for children below the age of 5; however, many daycare facilities also offer before- and after-school care.

Historic Background

Daycare emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe and the United States as a reflection of a variety of social and economic circumstances, including the industrial revolution and immigration of families. In the United States, nurseries and kindergartens were established to serve disadvantaged women, particularly widows and working women. During World War II, the first and only federal legislation that provided broad funding and support for childcare in the United States was the Lanham Act of 1941, which provided federal grant funding to states in order to create childcare facilities for women workers as they replaced men during the war. Federal funding was discontinued just weeks after the war.

The Need for Daycare

Whether by choice or economic necessity, the increased number of mothers in the labor force highlights the importance of childcare. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the participation of women with children under age 6 in the civilian U.S. labor force increased from 39 percent in 1975 to 63 percent in 2006. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that labor force participation rates of mothers with children under 6 years of age across selected countries in 2002 include Australia, 45 percent; Denmark, 74 percent; France, 58 percent; Germany, 52 percent; Italy, 46 percent; Spain, 43 percent; and the United Kingdom, 55 percent.

The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) indicates that nearly 75 percent of infants and toddlers of working mothers are cared for by someone outside of their immediate family. The use of daycare typically depends on the work status of the mother, but household income and education influence the age at which families place their children in care. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, children are more likely to be placed in daycare at an earlier age when the family is more dependent on the mother's income.

In contrast, a low-income family's children who have not entered daycare by their first birthday are more likely to live in poverty and have mothers with less education.

Martha Davis and Roslyn Powell indicate the need for childcare has also been recognized globally through the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1989. Article 18 of the CRC asserts that states have a duty to assist working parents in meeting the needs of childcare services. The CRC has been ratified by 191 countries—Somalia and the United States are the only UN members that have not ratified the CRC.

Daycare Centers and Home Daycare

Daycare center providers include privately owned organizations, although some universities and churches also sponsor daycare programs. Smaller, private daycare centers tend to operate out of a single location; however, in recent years, publicly traded corporate daycare centers have emerged. For example, ABC Learning is listed on the stock exchange and has centers in Asia, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Daycare centers are more likely to be licensed, subject to state inspections and regulation, employ trained staff, and provide a developmental curriculum. Licensed daycare centers separate children by age, meet specific caregiver and child ratios, and often provide age-appropriate cognitive and social development activities. However, the disadvantages of daycare centers include higher costs, staff turnover, and less individual attention. Home daycare providers offer care for children in their own home. The advantages of home daycare include lower costs and greater individual attention. Although most states in the United States require regulation among providers who care for more than four children, home daycare providers are less likely to be licensed and regulated.

Regulation of Daycare

In the United States, daycare centers and homes are licensed by the states, and standards vary accordingly. The National Association for the Education of Young Children provides recommendations on the organization and structure of daycare centers. Features of quality care include small adult-to-child

ratios, group size, caregiver's education level, safe physical environment, and age-appropriate learning activities. It is important for parents to understand that not all providers are licensed. Within the United States, individuals can learn about specific providers and regulations by contacting their state. Many states use Health and Human Services departments to license and regulate daycare providers.

Financing Daycare

A variety of methods are used to finance daycare, ranging from direct government sponsorship and provision of services to tax credits for parents who pay out-of-pocket expenses for daycare. The OECD reports that government support for formal daycare is highest among Nordic countries, where spending ranges from 1.5 to 2.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and lowest in Australia, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, and Turkey. Nevertheless, most countries provide some form of subsidy for low-income families and many use a fee based on income approach.

In Finland, all children under 7 years of age qualify for daycare, which is funded by the local authority regardless of parental income. In France, *écoles maternelles* (nursery schools) are funded by the National Ministry of Education. Parents pay no fee, and children between the ages of 2 and 6 are eligible. There are also *crèches collectives* (home daycare), in which fees are based on income. Payroll taxes are used to finance both systems.

In the United States, low-income families often qualify for subsidies for childcare, while middle- and upper-income families receive tax credits. Federal support for daycare is provided to the states through Child Care and Development Block Grants to provide assistance to low-income families. Head Start is also a well-known program for low-income children. Britain adopted a similar approach through the National Childcare Strategy, which established Sure Start (modeled after Head Start in the United States) to assist low-income children. Britain also offers tax credits for childcare.

Benefits of Daycare

Both children and mothers of young children can benefit from affordable, quality daycare. Many consider daycare to be an investment in the future

of our children and a means to promote equality for disadvantaged children. Several studies have demonstrated positive effects of daycare on cognitive development, while the studies on behavioral performance have been mixed. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) study found that children who attended daycare centers had better cognitive development and language skills, but were more likely to exhibit behavioral problems.

The National Institutes of Health also found that children who attended higher-quality childcare received higher scores on vocabulary tests in the fifth grade than children who attended lower-quality care. Studies of Head Start programs have also demonstrated positive effects of program participation on academic performance in early grade school; however, the effects diminish for minorities by age 10.

Day care also benefits mothers with young children by increasing labor force participation rates of women, promoting gender equality in the workplace, and raising household incomes. A 2004 OECD study found that government spending on public childcare increases full-time participation of women. Among those countries with less governmental support for daycare, such as the United States, high labor force participation rates of women with young children is partially explained by higher education levels and lower unemployment.

See Also: Childcare; Employment and Motherhood; Preschool Children; Work and Mothering.

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means to promote equality between men and women. Several studies have examined the effects of daycare on cognitive and behavioral development in children. The National Institute of Human Development and Human Development at children who attended early childhood education programs had higher cognitive development scores and were more likely to exhibit

children of Health also found that children who attended higher-quality child care had higher-quality children on vocabulary tests in kindergarten. Children who attended lower-quality child care had lower-quality children. Head Start programs have had positive effects on children's cognitive development and school performance in early grade school, but these effects diminish for minority children.

Mothers with young children and lower labor force participation rates tend to have lower household incomes. A 2004 study found that government spending on child care increases full-time participation rates in countries with less government spending on child care, such as the United States. The lower participation rates of women in the labor force are partially explained by higher rates of unemployment.

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de Beauvoir, Simone

French existentialist philosopher and writer Simone de Beauvoir (1908–86) wrote what is considered one of the most significant feminist works of the 20th century, *The Second Sex*. In it, Beauvoir presents what appears to be a controversial view of motherhood, which has been very severely criticized as well as misunderstood.

Originally published in 1949, the work examines the "woman question." Beauvoir analyzes the concept of woman from multiple perspectives: biological, anthropological, historical, cultural, philosophical, and phenomenological. She bases her inquiry on the idea that while there is a myth of the eternal feminine, it does not constitute an essence to which one does or ought to correspond. She is dismissive of such essentialist positions.

In her chapter on biology, Beauvoir posits that the female biology determines a woman to serve the species—and while this is also true for the male, pregnancy is much more onerous for the female. Beauvoir presents a grim picture of pregnancy and childbirth, wherein the female experiences her body as other than herself; literally raped by the male and possessed by the species, she is "Tenanted by another, who batters upon her substance through-

out the period of pregnancy, the female is at once herself and other than herself." Beauvoir describes the female body as radically altered by the sexual encounter and the pregnancy that ensues, and the female loses the sense of her own self. She feels alienated. Moreover, the fact that she has to provide care for the newborn has historically been the cause of her oppression, as she has been relegated to the household to perform these nurturing tasks.

In a later chapter of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir examines the figure of the Mother as it has emerged historically and culturally, beginning with a discussion of birth control and abortion. In a world where abortion was illegal and often performed at great risk to the mother, Beauvoir writes in favor of, and later militates for, the legalization of birth control and abortion. She explains it is because she wants women to be able to freely choose to be mothers.

Rewards of Motherhood

It is important for Beauvoir to express her opinion that motherhood can be extremely rewarding, if freely chosen, even if it is onerous for women—as well as charge that there is no such thing as a maternal instinct and that motherhood is not sufficient to fulfill woman. She presents these aforementioned ideas as patriarchal myths used to further oppress women and relegate them to a role where they cannot truly flourish, insisting that women who fail to perform such myths are made to feel unhappy and alienated. Such unhappy mothers become bad mothers who perpetuate such myths and seek to entrap their own daughters in turn. Beauvoir's goal is to demonstrate that these myths have no true substance: When women engage in motherhood as a freely chosen endeavor, they are better mothers and, by extension, better women. However, women do not need to be mothers to flourish as human beings.

See Also: Abortions; Becoming a Mother; Essentialism and Mothering; Feminist Theory and Mothering; Maternal Alienation; New French Feminism and Motherhood; Philosophy and Motherhood; Pregnancy; Self-Identity.

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