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Review of *Becoming Mature: Childhood Ghosts and Spirits in Adult Life*, by Valerie Malhotra Bentz.

Michael R. Hill

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, michaelhilltemporary1@yahoo.com

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(though only five are Black), and in sexual orientation. They were chosen not as a representative cross section of feminist mothers, but for their heterogeneity. "Mother" is used here as an objective category, a status held in common by women with children of two months and women with grandchildren. "Feminist," in contrast, is used entirely as a subjective category: "As I wanted to study how women with an alternative ideology construct their lives, it was important that women who were interviewed *considered themselves feminist*. Thus though some of the women felt that the label was somewhat artificial, they nevertheless decided that they were happy to be included in a book discussing this subject area" (p. 4, italics in original).

This definition of feminism remains both a strength and a weakness throughout the book. Since the project is focused on a woman's own construction of the meaning of motherhood for her in her life, such a subjective definition is clearly appropriate. On the other hand, as varied as the meaning of "mother" must be for women so differently situated, the meaning of "feminism" is even more varied. And since no women are interviewed who do *not* consider themselves feminist, it is very hard to tell just how the ideology of feminism influences the perception of motherhood. Consider the complaint of a married graduate student, mother of two young sons: "On the one hand I enjoyed being a mother and I enjoyed the babies, and on the other hand I hated the way you were treated like a cabbage . . . as if you had no brains" (p. 60). Is the reader to understand the first hand as the mother-hand and the second as the feminist hand? Or is it perhaps the other way around? Or is neither of these feelings a particular reflection of feminist ideology? Another mother, an electrician living with a lesbian partner, also with two sons, points to the opposite experience: "I noticed as soon as I had a baby people would treat me as a proper member of society. I had more status, shopkeepers would take me seriously and chat to me, whereas before they wouldn't" (p. 60). Are these experiences that give rise to feminist ideology, observations that grow out of it, or, again, neither?

It is only at the end of the book, literally in the last chapter, that the question "What is a feminist mother?" is specifically addressed and the interview data are presented on the

meaning of feminism for these women. The responses are just as varied as one might expect in a collection of fifty-two women from two countries who more or less consider themselves feminists. Some present feminism entirely as a "rights" issue, some as a personal "daring and belief in themselves," some as gratitude for being a woman. Since it is quite common to find women expressing any of these same feelings prefaced by "I'm not a feminist but . . .," it is terribly hard to find the unique and unifying ideology that is feminism in this work.

What we are left with, though, is not altogether unsatisfying. Gordon presents a textured, thoughtful report of women's experience of motherhood. This experience is more or less mediated by a feminist understanding (more for some women and less for others; more for some aspects of motherhood and less for others), but it is an experience that in any case continues to need to be voiced, heard, considered, analyzed, and contemplated. Gordon's book is one more contribution to the ongoing attempt by feminist scholars to understand the meaning and place of motherhood in the lives of women.

Becoming Mature: Childhood Ghosts and Spirits in Adult Life, by VALERIE MALHOTRA BENTZ. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1989. 280 pp. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN:0-202-30358-6. \$19.95 paper.

MICHAEL R. HILL
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

Bentz's work will appeal to many sociologists, including those with interests in contemporary theory, family studies, clinical sociology, and research methodologies. This useful and intellectually stimulating volume appears in the Communications and Social Order series, edited by David Maines. Peter Manning provides the foreword (pp. xiii-xvi).

Bentz builds on an impressive foundation of classical and contemporary theorists, including George Herbert Mead, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Schutz, Jürgen Habermas, and Norman Denzin. Some readers will be outraged by Bentz's conscious joining of symbolic interactionist concepts with ideas from psychoanalytic traditions. But readers who admire Habermas' recent transformations of Mead will cheer Bentz's effort and applaud

her deep empirical investigations of Habermasian themes. Bentz places her topic, maturation, in the center of current sociological theory debates. She attempts to move beyond existing theory boundaries, and concludes, "I realized that the theoretical boundaries of Schutz, Mead, and Habermas, as in depth and broad as they were, did not in any sense cover many of the important aspects of the processes of becoming mature" (p. 75). True. In a book analyzing the experiences of women, however, I expected incorporation of theoretical insights offered by Jane Addams and Jessie Taft.

Bentz identifies parent-child relationships as the source of maturity/immaturity in adult life. Specifically, "the establishment of an unfractured, sustaining bond to a primary caretaker is an essential first step in becoming mature" (p. 81). Conversely, fractured bonds lead to a vicious cycle of immaturity and become "self-perpetuating over generations" (p. 99). To break the cycle, immature adults must discover and confront what Bentz terms the "ghosts" of childhood: "the internalized voices of significant others from childhood that haunt us to think and act in immature, negative ways" (p. 4). "Ghosts," once acknowledged, can be replaced by "spirits," as Bentz terms them: "spirits are voices from the significant others of our past that 'inspire' us to be our best, most mature selves" (p. 4). Bentz outlines several group-based techniques for unearthing childhood ghosts.

A major section of the book (pp. 101–223) presents several "case constructions." Here, Bentz explores battering, sexual abuse, poverty, alcoholism, and death as factors that fracture parent-child relationships. She moves beyond case studies toward ideal types in that "the facts and interpretations represent summary constructs of the researcher [i.e., Bentz] and not necessarily the experiences of any actual women in the study" (p. 20). Bentz's clinical side is reflected in her straightforward assertion that "there are eleven aspects to mature parent-child relationships" (p. 81) and that her "theoretical concepts when placed together provide a diagnostic tool for the analysis of parent-child relationships" (p. 97). Pragmatically, these tools can ascertain "the extent to which parenting processes are adequate for the maturation of the child" (p. 97).

The methodological import of this book is significant and timely. Bentz initially strove for an accommodation between statistical and interpretive analyses, but everywhere found quantitative procedures unsatisfactory. Data were collected via several techniques, including videotapes, group discussions, autobiographies, and diaries. Autobiography guidelines, rating and coding sheets, and quantitative results are clearly presented, yet Bentz reflexively critiques her statistical findings. She writes that "for a while I became obsessed with producing more and more computer printouts of tables and charts" and these "kept me safe from comprehending the depth and scope of the effects of childhood adversities experienced by the women" who participated in her research (p. 49). Adopting a phenomenological stance, Bentz returned "to the things themselves and read once again the more than 4000 pages of narratives" and began anew (p. 50). The result is an interpretive spiral of increasing complexity and interest guided by theory and anchored in data. Bentz invites her readers to join her and enter the hermeneutic circle of interpretation (pp. 21–23). It is an offer no sociologist should refuse.

Peer Rejection in Childhood, edited by STEVEN R. ASHER and JOHN D. COIE. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 417 pp. \$59.50 cloth. \$18.95 paper. ISBN: 0-521-39863-3.

MARLENA M. STUDER
Tulane University

In their edited volume on experiences and outcomes of peer rejection in childhood, Asher and Coie direct scholarly attention to a significant context of psychosocial development: peer relationships. The antecedents, consequences, and modification of children's status in the peer group are investigated by developmental, clinical, and educational psychologists in an effort to identify, understand, and provide interventions for peer-rejected children.

In the first section, the authors identify behavioral characteristics of peer-rejected children. Results of research by Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt suggest that aggression and disruptive behavior are antecedents of social