standing the mother's definition of the family/public divide and expectations of assertiveness in public settings: weak or strong boundaries and high or low assertiveness. Ribbens explains that this model of childrearing allows for individual variation in childrearing and maternal mediation, by exploring how mothers may use their authority to negotiate boundaries between the home and public sphere. While I applaud Ribbens' work toward a comprehensive theory of childrearing, I find it a tentative feminist sociology of childrearing. Her speculations about how the image of children as little devils and its correspondence to Hobbesian political philosophy, as well as the image of children as innocents and its overlap with a Rousseau-esque social philosophy, requires further study amongst a sample of mothers marked by their racial, class, and sexual differences. And while I appreciate Ribbens attempt to put childrearing at the center of her analysis without bowing to what she calls "malestream" ideas about the centrality of work experience, I remain unconvinced that work experience—and the moral rhetorics encountered therein—is not critical to the development of childrearing philosophies. Similarly, I wondered about the political orientation of the women and whether such allegiances might reveal insights into their idealizations of childrearing. Nonetheless, I found this work interesting and provocative.

I would recommend this book for use in courses on the family. Ribbens provides an extensive and thought-provoking review of the literature on the family, including a feminist sociological critique of psychologists as experts on family dynamics and childrearing, as well as consideration of diverse theoretical traditions (Ribbens considers works ranging from that of Talcott Parsons, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Alfred Schutz to feminist sociologists such as Ann Oakley and Judith Stacey).

REBECCA ANNE ALLAHYARI


Breaking the violence and dead-end activity of *Menace II Society* just briefly, there is a scene with a teacher, apparently the only old head left around, who gives his best advice to the young gangster Cain. "Whatever changes you have to make," the teacher says, "just do it. The hunt is on, and you are the prey. All I'm saying is, survive." Cain listens and is touched by the man, but he enters Cain's life too late and has so little to offer. The film, and especially that scene, capture the bottom line, the essence, of the high school environment portrayed in this depressing, but authentic, book. It is a community with almost no hope.

Diver-Stamnes was completing a doctorate in educational psychology the first year she taught high school in Watts. Following graduation by the end of that first year (about 1987), she decided to stay on to complete work on two innovative programs she had instituted, to extend her teaching apprenticeship in a demanding setting, and to study and confront the effects of inner-city poverty on adolescent students. Located among government housing projects, ranked at the bottom of schools in Los Angeles County (based on standardized
math and reading scores), attended by students whose families were predominantly dependent upon welfare and whose attrition rate held steady at 45%, the school virtually guaranteed the challenge, and the opportunity, she sought. *Lives in the Balance* is her report of what she experienced and learned.

Diver-Stamnes is at her most convincing and most informative in passages based on her own experience and expertise. Much of her in-depth information on the students likely came from the peer counseling program she established. Further, she learned from the students by reaching out to them, even to those with difficult or sensitive problems, such as unplanned pregnancy, drug addiction, and severe parental abuse, because "...the role of educators is to teach, and ... learning cannot occur when students' physical and emotional well being is in jeopardy."

I particularly appreciated Diver-Stamnes' interest in the female students. So often, in portraits of the inner-city or underclass, males emerge in clearer focus, appear more interesting, suggest greater complexity and depth than the females. In contrast, *Lives* gives the female students at least equal consideration, it is a wonderful source of information about their special problems, experiences, and strengths.

*Lives* also provides a straightforward, insider’s view of how an inner-city school itself helps reproduce and reinforce the inequities of a community. The school in Watts was used as a training ground for the district’s administrators, for example, and as a dumping ground for poor staff and used materials. The school made no effort to train teachers for work in the inner-city or to cultivate an appreciation for the student population. Apart from administration offices, the school facility was also very poorly maintained.

Much of the book (the first 5 of 7 chapters) is devoted to discussions of the students’ major problem areas—problems identified, the author contends, by those who would blame the poor for their own plights. The first chapter is devoted to inner-city schooling, followed by chapters on troubled family life, gangs, substance abuse, and deplorable living conditions. Diver-Stamnes’ major point is that the common, serious, mutually-reinforcing nature of these problem areas virtually assures the children's high rates of school failure. Weaving together powerful influences and circumstances that stack the cards against these children, even before their births, the author provides considerable support for the argument. A 6th chapter focuses on the civil unrest that occurred in Watts in 1992 following acquittal of the police officers who beat Rodney King (and not long after the author left Watts). The final chapter presents her suggestions for change.

Uncovering the causes of the identified problems and then determining solutions for the problems were the author's explicit goals. Taking on such goals, without any limiting framing device, was the author's undoing. As she notes, the identified problems are clearly interrelated—any one of them could have stood for the whole. The causes are even more complex, however, and virtually worldwide in scope, as Diver-Stamnes clearly observes.

The book is presented in a scholarly format and may well touch on most of the causes of the nation’s expanding underclass. I found the analytic chapters flawed, however, by many unsubstantiated, sometimes debatable, conclusions (such as attributing the tensions between Korean Americans and African Americans in Watts to a lack of knowledge and "intercultural competence") and by limited attention to the specific ways by which the larger society impinges on the inner-city. The author also infused discussion with rhetoric and