Mother-Scholar presents another way of knowing. The book illuminates the narratives of prominent mother-scholars in the discipline of education who are determined to (re)imagine a different educational space not only for their own children, but for all children. Today’s schools are male-centered institutions in which standardized testing, rational mind, and emotionless space prevent children from realizing their full potential as creative, intelligent and soulful beings. Mother-scholars in the discipline of education assert that when motherhood and intellect confront and inform each other, a new thinking emerges to capture the possibility of humanizing education beyond the private relationships between mothers and children.
This book series is dedicated to the radical love and actions of Paulo Freire, Jesus “Pato” Gomez, and Joe L. Kincheloe.
TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity–youth identity in particular–the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant. But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference. If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
Mother-Scholar

(Re)imagining K-12 Education

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SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI
To Diego, Carlo, and Marco
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................................................................................... ix  
Chapter 1: Mother-Scholar .................................................................................... 1  
Chapter 2: Androcentrism in Schools ................................................................. 11  
Chapter 3: Mother-Scholars Intellectualize the Private Sphere ......................... 17  
Chapter 4: Mother-Scholars Maternalize the "Public" Sphere ......................... 23  
Chapter 5: Mother-Scholars Navigate the "Third Space" ................................... 29  
Chapter 6: Mother-Scholars (Re)imagine Schools ........................................... 39  
Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 45  
Epilogue ................................................................................................................. 47  
References ............................................................................................................. 55
INTRODUCTION

We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her body. In such a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth not only children (if and as we choose) but the visions, and the thinking, necessary to sustain, console, and alter human existence – a new relationship to the universe.

--- Adrienne Rich

Mother-scholar presents a vital source of knowledge. The book illuminates the narratives of mother-scholars in the field of education who are determined to (re)imagine the educational space not only for their own children, but for all children. The book details how the experiences of motherhood and academic thinking confront and inform each other within the field of education.

This project is both personal and scholarly. As a mother of three young boys and a scholar in the field of education, I questioned whether my intellectual shifts could be simply defined as “work-life balance,” “mama Ph.D.,” or any other such label. My maternal experiences challenged me to think critically about the role mother-scholars play in the education of all children.

As I searched for resources, I realized that the concept of “motherhood” is virtually invisible in the writings of female scholars within the field of education. This is problematic as the field itself focuses on the development of children. This book attempts to interrogate the invisibility of “motherhood” as both a theme and driving force in education, providing a much-needed space for “mother-scholar” epistemology to unfold.

The invisibility of mother-scholars in the field of education reflects a much larger trend in academia. Literature reveals that even though more women are pursuing academic careers, becoming and being a mother in academia has a deleterious impact on women’s professional advancement. Mason and Goulden’s (2002) study, examining the effect of early pregnancy on women’s academic careers, reveals that women with early babies are less likely to achieve tenure than women with late babies or no children. Alice Fothergill and Kathryn Feltey note that despite the fact that more women are earning their doctorates, “the structure of tenure-track jobs has not changed in any real way to accommodate them” (2003, 17). Perhaps this is why, they continue, “the number of women in tenure track jobs has declined: from 46 percent in 1977 to 32 percent in 1995” (17). The American Association of University Professors confirmed in their Statement of Principles on Family Responsibility and Academic Work (2001):

Although increasing numbers of women have entered academia, their academic status has been slow to improve: women remain disproportionately represented within instructor, lecturer, unranked positions; more than 57 percent of those holding such positions are women while among full
INTRODUCTION

professors only 26 percent are women; likewise among full-time faculty women, only 48 percent are tenured whereas 68 percent of men are...

As noted by Angela Simeone, existing research on motherhood in academia also shows that “marriage and family, while having a positive effect on the [academic] careers of men, has a negative effect on the progress of women’s careers. Married women, particularly with children, are more likely to have dropped out of graduate school, have interrupted or abandoned their careers, be unemployed or employed in a job unrelated to their training, or to hold lower academic rank” (12). Indeed, Fothergill and Feltey (2003) observe that “university settings have been found to be so hostile to women that the ‘Ivory Tower’ has been called the ‘Toxic Tower’ by some in academia” (9).

Hewlett’s (2006) study found that “across a range of professions, high achieving women continue to have an exceedingly hard time combining career and family: 33 percent of high-achieving woman and 49 percent of ultra-achieving women are childless at age 40; (this compares to 25 percent of high-achieving men and 19 percent for ultra-achieving men)” (86). Hewlett concludes that “the more successful the woman, the less likely it is she will find a husband or bear a child. For men the reverse is true. The more successful the man, the more likely he is to be married with children” (42).

Upon investigating a diverse range of professions (e.g., medicine, law, business and government service), Crittenden (2001) found that although women were entering all of these professions in record numbers, few of them held senior level positions and most of them were childless. A significant, albeit surprising, finding within Hewlett’s research was that female academics have the highest rate of childlessness at 43 percent (97). Clearly, mothers are disparaged and underrepresented in academia.

What is equally alarming is the scarcity of research on mothers in the academe. As Alice Fothergill and Kathryn Feltey (2003) note, “The inclusion of women in academia as subjects of research on work and family/parenting has occurred only recently—and only in a limited way.”

It is against this backdrop that I write this book. Not only is there a negative relationship between mothers and academia, there is a limited amount of information on the implications of this relationship for those of us who are in it. How do we survive? How can maternal identity be a source of empowerment in intellectual spaces? Although Mother-Scholar focuses on the field of education, it is not limited to this field. I am confident mother-scholars exist across a variety of disciplines. This book hopes to ignite, expand, and deepen the conversation on the relationship between maternal identity and scholarship. Through narrative, I hope to theorize the synergy between the intellect and the maternal, proclaiming that maternal thinking can genuinely enrich scholarly work in a field that focuses on the development, education, and well being of children.

MOTHER-SCHOLAR STANDPOINT(S)

It is important to highlight the methodology that grounds my work. As a feminist researcher, I concur that accepted qualitative methodologies are intrinsically
INTRODUCTION

androcentric and positivistic (Harding, 2004). This narrow scope denigrates alternative methodologies. For example, women have fought to have an epistemic foothold in academia, only to have their knowledge claims dismissed for lacking objectivity (Haraway, 2004). Some feminist theorists feel that academia has ignored and misrepresented the reality of difference – being poor, of color, homosexual, and/or female – altogether. In academia, “different” perspectives are typically disregarded. In response, my work is based on a qualitative methodology grounded in the perspective of mother-scholars, privileging a source of knowledge that has been silenced for too long.

Standpoint theory, as a qualitative methodology, best represents the voices and lived experiences of mother-scholars. The theory itself is a direct challenge to Eurocentric, male concepts of objectivity. Standpoint theory imparts that developing a standpoint from the perspective of the oppressed gives researchers an “epistemological, political, and scientific advantage” (Harding, 2004, 8) over researchers who fail to account for alternative knowledge claims. It is also important to note that Standpoint theory is political. Standpoint theorists do not deny that their perspective has a political agenda. In fact, standpoint theorists understand that this political agenda is what leverages marginalized knowledge claims, gives them power, and prompts subsequent research. Harding (2004) writes, “Political engagement rather than dispassionate neutrality, was necessary to gain access to the means to do research” (Harding, 2004, 6). Harding continues, “Political struggle develops insights” that render a more complete understanding of oppression (7).

Standpoint theorists know that embarking on political engagement is the only way to create change. Arguing from a neutral or objective position only reinforces the status quo, thus hindering a comprehensive perspective of oppression. Conversely, acknowledging the perspective of oppressed groups yields a better understanding of inequality and social order as a whole. For example, granting epistemic privilege to mother-scholar modes of knowledge sheds light on narratives that have been historically silenced and ignored. Mother-scholar epistemology provides a more exhaustive account of androcentric oppression in academia and in K-12 schooling.

Moreover, because Standpoint theory is based on the knowledge of oppressed peoples and for oppressed peoples, the methodology’s qualitative “data” comes in the form of stories and allegories. This type of data is problematic for academics that have been taught to resist less formal presentations of information. They believe that stories and narratives are inadequate, as they are far too subjective. Harding (2004) writes, “Philosophers and science theorists do not take kindly to being asked to think that such a ‘folk philosophy’ or ‘folk science’ has something to teach them” (Harding, 2004, 3).

Thus, Standpoint theory is challenged by the perception that it is relativistic and unscientific. Harding (2004) writes, “Some critics ask if standpoint theory’s focus on the importance of the experience of women and other oppressed groups ensures that it has abandoned the epistemological uses of the concepts of truth, objectivity, and good method” (7). Standpoint theorists respond by stating that the data produced through the development of a standpoint possesses a “strong objectivity”
INTRODUCTION

(Harding, 2004, 138) that proceeds from gathering information that is actually closer to the truth of oppression. Standpoint theory’s data (i.e., stories and narratives) come straight from hearts and minds of the oppressed. The theoretical musings of privileged individuals (i.e., “objective” data) are essentially knowledge claims from positions of power that fail to fully understand the lives of the oppressed.

The mother-scholar standpoint challenges the notion that maternal identity is a devalued form of knowledge, believing that it should be elevated to the same space occupied by science and rationality. Ultimately, mother-scholars drive the feminist passion for multiplicity, contextualism, and thinking borne out of the female-identified experience.

WHO ARE WE?

Twenty-eight mother-scholars were selected through purposive sampling at universities across the United States. The mother-scholars who participated in this study are all full time faculty members affiliated with their respective university’s school of education. The group was diverse in age, race, sexual orientation, class, and ability and included mothers who are single and coupled, women with one and several children and women who plan and did not plan their pregnancies. I included narratives from mother-scholars who are in the beginning stages of tenure track, mother-scholars who are non-tenure track, and mother-scholars (both tenure track and non-tenure track) who are at the end of their career.

In-depth interviews with each participant consisted of three general areas: (1) information on the participant and her experiences engaging in scholarly work as a mother, (2) knowledge and beliefs about motherhood and education, and (3) perception of the interplay between the maternal and the intellect. The mother-scholars were asked to discuss their intellectual work, and how maternal identity impacted academic work. In addition, I asked them how they position themselves as mother-scholars in public and private spheres. The interview questions were guided by the findings of the current research on motherhood in academia; the research on maternal thinking; and feminist analyses of schooling.

The mother-scholars were also asked to participate in a journaling process. I asked them to describe significant experiences that have shaped their perspective as a mother-scholar and how their perspective influenced their work. The journal writing exercises spanned over the course of six months, providing a more reflective space to record a variety of experiences.

From the interviews and journaling, focus groups emerged. I conducted two focus group interviews with the mother-scholars. The first focus group interview consisted of five mother-scholars. The second focus group interview consisted of four mother-scholars. The focus group provided a group setting for mother-scholars to discuss emerging themes from the individual interviews and journal entries among their peers.

The request for participants was distributed through Women’s Studies and Education list serves. I also attended the 2010 Association for Research on
Motherhood Conference and the 2009 Gender and Education Conference. Snowballing allowed me to contact mother-scholars as well.

I transcribed the interviews, then analyzed and interpreted them using the constant comparative approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My approach was inductive. I identified common themes and emerging patterns using content analysis. Through this technique, “the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1980, 306). This method of analysis is befitting, as there is limited research on mother-scholars, and very few pre-established themes or categories on the relationship between mothering and intellect.

The data collection and analysis conformed to the highest standards of qualitative research, using the common qualitative tools and technologies of triangulation, member checks, thick descriptions, and audit trails (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used two types of triangulation – investigator and theory triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Theory triangulation relies on the use of multiple perspectives to interpret data. In this study, I relied on research emerging from the fields of psychology, sociology, education, and women’s studies to triangulate the data. As I collected the data, I conferred continuously with emerging themes. I also used my own position and intuition as a mother-scholar to provide insight in collecting and analyzing the data.

To further maintain the integrity of the data, I conducted regular member checks by selecting member participants to review and analyze working themes to confirm that the themes resonated with their individual experiences. I incorporated their feedback into the final narrative (Janesick, 2000). Moreover, by directly quoting study participants’ accounts of their lives, I used thick description to keep the analysis consistent with the data. To ensure accuracy, I maintained an audit trail by keeping detailed records of all stages of the data collection and analysis.

Format

The first chapter of the book includes a theoretical overview of the synergy between maternity and intellect, building the theoretical framework for analysis, “mother-scholar.” The chapter begins with Adrienne Rich’s monumental contention that even when restrained by patriarchy, motherhood can be a source of empowerment and political activism. I investigate the work of eminent scholars who explore the deep relationship between motherhood and cognition.

Chapter 1 also reveals that most literature falls short in concretizing how the experiences of motherhood can be distilled and organized into a knowledge that is recognized in our culture. A concrete organization as such would allow these experiences to be as respected as our present forms of erudition. Only when this type of organization is achieved will it be possible for motherhood and academe to cohere as they should. I conclude Chapter 1 with a working definition of “mother-scholar” in the field of education.
INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, prior to discussing strategies for bringing mother-scholar epistemology into various dialogues in education, I shed light on some of the masculine underpinnings constricting the field of education. I provide an overview of the state of education in the United States, asserting that schools continue to reify male-created knowledge and power.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I prioritize the narratives and scholarly works of mother-scholars, and present the significant themes that emerged from the interviews and journals. Mother-scholars ultimately turn a critical eye toward binaries by intellectualizing private spaces and maternalizing the public sphere. For instance, I discuss how mother-scholars systematically intellectualize the private space of their children’s schools – applying for grants and conducting research at their own children’s school sites are common practices among mother-scholars. I also explore how mother-scholars demonstrate a sense of urgency in their scholarship to preserve and foster the educational well being of all children.

In Chapter 5, I provide the ways in which mother-scholars approach binaries and navigate these blurry spaces. Three courses of action emerge: Mother-scholars are committed to contradictions and contextualized moments; Mother-scholars are committed to temporal agreements and short-term agendas; Mother-scholarship is committed to one bottom line: the preservation of the child. Mother-scholars ultimately strive to combine their professional aspirations within the field of education with their maternal concern for children, so as to humanize the classroom and enhance the education experience for both teachers and students. These women, by way of maternal thinking, think critically about their research and its implications for the future of education.

I write these chapters in the spirit of empowerment. Mother-scholars know too well the negative impact of patriarchal society on motherhood. We know the double-shift. We know that the tenure system was designed by and for men. With these various forms of oppression in mind, I seek other ways of knowing that address maternal intellect and agency. Fiona Green (2004) explains, “Still largely missing from the increasing dialogue and publication around motherhood is a discussion of Rich’s monumental contention that even when restrained by patriarchy, motherhood can be a site of empowerment and political activism” (31).

In Chapter 6, to counter the patriarchal structures of schooling, I offer a (re)imagining of K-12 education grounded in mother-scholar ways of knowing. This chapter highlights that there is a crucial element missing in the various discussions on standpoint theory: there is little discussion as to how the transitions from positionings to practices, practices to standpoints, knowledge, meaning, values and goals, actually take place. I argue that one of the central ways in which these transitions and transformations take place is by various processes of imagining. Based on a critical understanding of ‘standpoint theory’ and the concept of ‘situatedness,’ I extend the discussion of (situated) knowledge, so as to include the notion of the (situated) imagination (Stoetzel & Yuval-Davis, 2002).

I include points of departure that imagine a different kind of education, dismantling the binary between the mind and the body. These new visions include
the creation of an educational environment where children do their best work with their unique energy, venture outside of their comfort zone, find their tribe, learn to live together differently, take breaks and replenish, find inner-peace, and, let go of fear.

Definitions

Gender will be treated here as the complex ways that women and men come to identify themselves as feminine and masculine. This definition differentiates gender from sex. Sex refers to the biological differences between females and males (i.e., genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs, etc.). Although I acknowledge that these biological differences exist – especially in light of a study on mother-scholars – I also acknowledge that sex differences come in a variety of forms (i.e., intersex). These differences are not limited to “male” and “female,” though they are often the only two forms of difference recognized in modern Western culture. In addition, specific definitions of “woman” and “man,” or “masculinity” and “femininity,” have been historically and socially constructed in such a way that females are deemed inferior to males.

In regard to the themes presented in this book, gender differences (including important differences in social, political, and economic power among women and men) derive from the representations and meanings assigned by biological differences. This is problematic, as these differences have been passed down, internalized, and exchanged historically through complex systems (like schools), and presented as if there were only biological. Kimmel (2000) explains:

Gender is not simply a system of classification by which the biological males and biological females are sorted, separated, and socialized into quasi-univalent sex roles. Gender also expresses…inequality between women and men.

When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference. (1)

Feminism also needs to be defined. Recognizing that the term is too often sensationalized, I refer to the critical and ethical ideology that analyzes and examines the ways that women are and have been inferiorized through social and institutional processes in social, economic, and political contexts. Feminism comes in a variety of theoretical and political forms. The forms emerge from the diverse experiences of women and men who are concerned about oppression. Many feminists understand that sexist practices and beliefs, and patriarchal systems are not disconnected from other forms of domination (i.e., racism, class-based oppression, or ecological degradation). Because there are important differences in women’s experiences as they pertain to class and race, different feminist groups see different historical debates as critical points of focus. That being said, feminists strive to promote sexual equity in the face of an androcentric society.

Conversely, androcentrism is the idea that men are naturally superior to women because they hold the natural capacity for reason. According to Enlightenment thinkers, women were not fit to be part of the political decision-making process
INTRODUCTION

primarily because they lacked the capacity for reason. Women’s natural capacity for reproduction made domesticity and childrearing their natural sphere of influence. Thus, women were defined by the biological function of their womb, rather than their intellectual capacity – woman was analogous to body, while man was analogous to mind. Man, the rational one, then uses his mind to create culture, while woman, the emotional and reproductive one, serves her biological function. Because man is the perceived rational creator of culture, women are associated with (or analogous to) nature. Because nature is seen as incomplete without man’s reason, women (as nature) were brought under the control of their fathers, husbands, the methodologies of science, or the State.

In the history of schooling and education, women’s biological capacity to bear children has limited their essential value in Western Eurocentric and androcentric thinking. A woman’s capacity is associated with her body, not her mind. Although the feminist movement has successfully shifted androcentric thinking, challenged patriarchal culture, and confronted the aforementioned notions of inferiority, the consequences of androcentrism are still pervasive in society.

***

Androcentrism dominates ideas and policies in education. A mother-scholar standpoint is crucial as we witness how male ways of knowing inhibit successful learning environments for teachers and students. This book illustrates how the epistemology of mother-scholars can effectively challenge androcentric ideologies and create a superior space for education. Today’s schools are male-centric institutions in which standardized testing, rational mind, and emotionless space prevent children from realizing their full potential as creative, intelligent, and soulful beings. My central assertion is that maternal thinking offers the possibility of humanizing education beyond the private relationships between mothers and children.
CHAPTER 1

MOTHER-SCHOLAR

Women Who Intellectualize and Women Who Mother

INTRODUCTION

Feminists have asserted that maternal knowledge can be applied outside the immediate context of family, informing and benefiting other social arenas and concerns, such as politics, community relationships, peace, and environmental justice.

In this chapter, I include a theoretical overview of the synergy between maternity and intellect, building the theoretical framework for analysis, “mother-scholar.” The chapter begins with Adrienne Rich’s monumental contention that even when restrained by patriarchy, motherhood can be a source of empowerment and political activism. From there, I investigate the work of eminent scholars who explore the deep relationship between mothering and cognition.

MOTHER-SCHOLARS

Adrienne Rich

Adrienne Rich’s Of Woman Born is a blend of academic discourse and autobiography. It rests upon the assumption that “the personal is political.” It highlights the maternal subject as complex, thoughtful, and in dialogue with current ideologies concerning maternity, with what Rich terms the “institution” of motherhood. This institution is, in Rich’s view, shaped by patriarchal conceptions of women.

As such, Adrienne Rich’s 1976 view of motherhood as “experience” and “institution” was a breakthrough. Rich distinguishes “between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control” (1986, 13). For Rich, the term motherhood is used to signify the patriarchal institution of motherhood, while mothering refers to women’s lived experiences of childrearing as they both conform to and/or resist the patriarchal institutor of motherhood and its oppressive ideology.

By highlighting the lived experience of motherhood, Rich allows us to examine how motherhood operates as a patriarchal institution to constrain, regulate, and dominate women and their mothering. “[F]or most of what we know as the ‘mainstream’ of recorded history,” Rich writes, “motherhood as institution has ghettoized and degraded female potentialities” (13). However, as Rich argues, and
her book seeks to demonstrate, this meaning of motherhood is neither natural nor inevitable. “The patriarchal institution of motherhood,” Rich explains, “is not the ‘human condition’ any more than rape, prostitution, and slavery are” (33). Rather motherhood, in Rich’s words, “has a history, it has an ideology” (33).

“To destroy the institution is not to abolish motherhood,” Rich writes, “It is to release the creation and sustenance of life into the same realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination and conscious intelligence, as any difficult, but freely chosen work” (280). Thus, her distinction between experience and institution leads to the distinction between patriarchal motherhood and the possibility or potentiality of mothering.

In addition to this contribution, Rich also spells out “the corporeal ground of our intelligence” (1986b, 40). Rich’s interest in motherhood as an ongoing corporeal relational process – “We are neither inner nor outer constructed; our skin is alive with signals, our lives and our deaths are inseparable from the release or blockage of our thinking bodies” (1986b, 284).

This emphasis on embodied acts of thinking and politicization is extended in Rich’s later writings, in which she becomes more conscious of the partiality of her location as a feminist writer and the need to turn from declarations of “the body” toward inscriptions of “my body”:

To write “my body” plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurations, discolorations, damages, losses, as well as what pleases me. Bones well nourished from the placenta; the teeth of a middle-class person seen by the dentist twice a year from childhood. White skin, marked and scarred by three pregnancies, and elected sterilization, progressive arthritis, four joint operations, calcium deposits, no rapes, no abortions, long hours at a typewriter—my own, not in a typing pool—and so forth. To say “the body” lifts me away from what has given me a primary perspective. To say “body” reduces the temptation to grandiose assertions. (Rich, 1986b, 215)

In *Of Woman Born*, Rich names her experiences as part of a critical interpretive process activating memory and speech by “thinking through the body” which is part of her larger understanding of “thinking as an active, fluid, expanding process; intellection…knowing are recapitulations of past processes” (1986b, 284).

While mothering is not described or theorized in *Of Woman Born*, in distinguishing mothering from motherhood and in identifying the potential empowerment of mothering, the text made possible later feminist work on mothering – particularly those that analyzed mothering as a site of power and resistance for women. Concomitantly, in interrupting and deconstructing the patriarchal narrative of motherhood, Rich destabilized the hold this discourse has on the meaning and practice of mothering, fostering women-centered and feminist meanings and experiences of mothering.
Sara Ruddick addresses the political and epistemic implications of maternal work. Her work is groundbreaking, as she is the first to suggest that maternal activities give rise to unique ways of thinking.

Ruddick claims that while caring for children is not “natural” for woman, it has been a womanly practice in most societies – a practice that she believes to be important for peace politics. Ruddick defines maternal thinking as focused on the preservation of life and the growth of children.

In *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, Sara Ruddick argues that the work of mothering “demands that mothers think; out of this need for thoughtfulness, a distinctive discipline emerges” (24). Ruddick elaborates:

> I speak about a mother’s thought – the intellectual capacities she develops, the judgments she makes, the metaphysical attitudes she assumes, the values she affirms. Like a scientist writing up her experiment, a critic poring over a text, or a historian assessing documents, a mother caring for her children engages in a discipline. She asks certain questions – those relevant to her aims – rather than others; she accepts certain criteria for the truth, adequacy, and relevance of proposed answers; and she cares about the findings she makes and can act on. The discipline of maternal thought, like other disciplines, establishes criteria for determining failure and success, sets priorities, and identifies virtues that the discipline requires. Like any other work, mothering is prey to characteristic temptations that it must identify. To describe the capacities, judgments, metaphysical attitudes, and values of maternal thought presumes not maternal achievement, but a conception of achievement. (24)

Ruddick argues that motherwork is characterized by three demands: preservation, growth, and social acceptance. “To be a mother,” continues Ruddick, “is to be committed to meeting these demands by works of preservative love, nurturance, and training” (17).

The first duty of mothers is to protect and preserve their children: “to keep safe whatever is vulnerable and valuable in a child” (80). “Preserving the lives of children,” Ruddick writes, “is the central constitutive, invariant aim of maternal practice: the commitment to achieving that aim is the constitutive maternal act” (19). Ruddick continues, “To be committed to meeting children’s demand for preservation does not require enthusiasm or even love; it simply means to see vulnerability and to respond to it with care rather than abuse, indifference, or flight” (19). “The demand to preserve a child’s life is quickly supplemented,” Ruddick explains, “by the second demand, to nurture its emotional and intellectual growth” (19). Ruddick asserts:
CHAPTER 1

To foster growth...is to sponsor or nurture a child’s unfolding, expanding material spirit. Children demand this nurturance because their development is complex, gradual, and subject to distinctive kinds of distortion or inhibition...Children’s emotional, cognitive, sexual, and social development is sufficiently complex to demand nurturance; this demand is an aspect of maternal work...and its structures maternal thinking. (83)

The third demand of maternal practice is training and social acceptability of children. This third demand, Ruddick writes:

...is made not by children’s needs but by the social groups of which a mother is a member. Social groups require that mothers shape their children’s growth in “acceptable” ways. What counts as acceptable varies enormously within and among groups and cultures. The demand for acceptability, however, does not vary, nor does there seem to be much dissent from the belief that children cannot “naturally” develop in socially correct ways but must be “trained.” I use the neutral, though somewhat harsh, term “training” to underline a mother’s active aims to make her children “acceptable.” Her training strategies may be persuasive, manipulative, educative, abusive, seductive, or respectful and are typically a mix of most of these. (21)

The many and various needs of children that arise from each demand of mother work, and the various and many responses of the mother, coalesce to form the discipline of maternal thought. Specifically, mother work gives rise to particular cognitive styles – particular ways of seeing and handling the world. Moreover, because so much of mother work is beyond the control of the mother, mothers develop what Ruddick calls humility: “In a world beyond one’s control, to be humble is to have a profound sense of the limits of one’s actions and of the unpredictability of the consequences of one’s work” (72).

When mothers set out to fulfill the demands of mother work – to protect, nurture, train – they are engaged in maternal practice. This engagement, in turn, gives rise to a specific discipline of thought – a cluster of attitudes, beliefs, and values – which Ruddick calls maternal thinking.

Patricia Hill-Collins

P.H. Collins’ work takes the concept of mother work and provides an excellent instance of theorizing from a clearly identifiable location. In “Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood,” Collins bases her argument on the premise that when no neutral standpoint exists from which to theorize, attention to the locations from which theory is done becomes crucial. Collins uses the context in which contemporary African American mothering occurs as the location from which to theorize – a location she believes “promises to shift our thinking about motherhood itself” (Collins, 1992, 5). As a result of shifting the center and theorizing from an identified location, Collins produces a description of maternal practice that is tangibly distinct from Ruddick’s nearly universal version.
Collins construction of mother work, based on the lives of mothers of color, produces a more specific list of mothering activities than Ruddick’s does. Collins argues that survival, identity, and empowerment “form the bedrock of women of color’s mothering” (Collins, 1992, 7).

According to Collins, the physical and psychological survival of their children is central to the daily activities of these mothers. Unlike the survival of most children born into white middle class communities, the survival of children of color cannot be taken for granted. Disproportionate rates of infant mortality, poor medical care, crime, and drugs require the daily attention of these mothers.

The second activity of Collins’ motherwork is teaching children how to retain their identity in dominant white culture without “becoming willing participants in their own subordination” (Collins, 1990, 123). Collins’s mother work means helping one’s children develop a meaningful racial identity within a society that devalues their history, work, culture, and customs.

Finally, Collins’s motherwork is structured by racial-ethnic mothers’ struggle over the definition and control of their caring labor, to empower them so that they may meet the needs of their own children and their own community. Theirs is a struggle against economic exploitation and usurpation of their labor to meet the needs of the dominant culture. Working from a particular identified location, Collins constructs a model of maternal activity that is significantly different from Ruddick’s general account.

**Cherrie Moraga**

Cherrie Moraga explores the personal, social, and spiritual consequences of lesbian motherhood. In her 1997 book, *Waiting in the wings: Portrait of a queer motherhood,* Moraga queers the structure of family, presenting a blueprint in which queer motherhood becomes a radical place of possibility for the future of Chicana/o culture. Moraga illuminates the dynamics between butch and mother as mutually exclusive categories in a patriarchal society. She talks about the shift:

I’m the dyke in the matter, I tell myself. I’m the one who’s supposed to be on the outside. But not now. As Rafael’s biological mother, I am surrounded by acceptance at the hospital, until Ella walks in and we are again the lesbian couple, the queer moms – exoticized or ostracized.

This dynamic highlights the dominant culture’s anxiety regarding the tenuousness of gender identities, in particular maternal identities. Moraga continues to detail the harsh realities of such a subject position. For instance, Moraga writes of the hetero-sexist treatment her partner receives a mother:

Ella called the hospital this morning to inquire about the baby, having to put up with usual deterrents: Who are you the receptionist hears no lame voice on the line, but a woman, my lover, seeking to know about our son. Read the damn chart, Ella snaps back. I’m the co-mother. Co-mother – a concept about which even the San Francisco hospitals haven’t clue (63).
What is significant in this text is that Moraga defines queer motherhood as a space of possibility. As a queer mother, Moraga claims motherhood while retaining her butch identification. In her vignettes, Moraga takes the concepts of “mother,” “butch,” and “women,” and presents overlapping combinations, rather than distinct and oppositional sites of meaning. She extends the experiences of mothering as a site of empowerment and a location for social change. She writes:

I am doing a children’s play so I tell myself. “This is only a children’s play,” which I have authored in order to provide my eight-year-old son and his Oakland public school with some notion of MeXicano history and culture beyond the obligatory Ballet Folkórico performance; red, green, and white crepe paper draped from the cafeteria ceiling; and tortilla chips with salsa. (My compadre and fellow playwright Ricardo Bracho affectionately referred to this three-month residency at Sequoia Elementary as my unofficial Theater Communications Group grant. What a country it would be if national granting programs actually paid for such work.)

The majority of kids in my son’s second-to-third grade class are African American, followed by Asian American and Latino. There is one white girl among them (who herself claims to be a quarter-breed Mexican; I don’t doubt her). The project of our coming together is clear in my mind: the opportunity to re-(en)vision Mexican and Xicano history from a Xicana Indígena and feminist perspective on stage. I hadn’t exactly articulated this to anyone, but was grateful to find that my son’s teacher, African American and lesbian, was only too eager to yield the stage floor to me and my ideas. (2002)

Although the last decade has seen very few academic journals, conferences, or syllabi pertaining to motherhood, individual female scholars have effectively touched on various aspects of motherhood in alternative academic presses. Although motherhood frequently appears in popular discussion, it has received very little airtime in the academe, isolating it from the heart of academic feminism. Recent history has witnessed a new generation of postmodern, feminist mother-scholars, rejecting any “fixed or essential aspect of maternal experience, desire, or subjectivity” (Kawash, 2011, 973). This postmodern feminist impulse in the United States has prompted a new, albeit limited, mothers’ movement striving to bridge the gap between academic feminism (i.e., esteemed scholars, departments, and journals) and popular, mainstream discussion. Feminist scholar and leader, Andrea O’Reilly actively spearheaded this movement, giving rise to three veins of thought: 1) scholarly work on motherhood, 2) a popular mother’s movement with related literature and field work, and 3) O’Reilly’s efforts to create a field in academia for mothering studies.

It is important to note to that any attempt to advance the discussion or study of motherhood in academia must acknowledge O’Reilly’s earnest commitment to institutionalize motherhood studies. As a leader within the mothers’ movement and
an associate professor at York University, O’Reilly started the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM – now called the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement [MIRCI]), under which she launched a publishing house, founded a journal and organized multitude of conferences. O’Reilly has also been quite prolific in her career, having wrote and edited a variety of monographs, journals and books.

One of the most pertinent barriers that the mothers’ movement has faced is the systematic silencing of their voices as mothers. This silencing has become a significant emerging theme in various writings on motherhood. Some of the major collections that house the unique experiences of mothers, struggling, succeeding and being silenced in the academe are: “Mama, PhD,” “Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory,” and “Parenting and Professing,” all of which include first-person narratives that depict, among other things, obstacles to obtaining tenure, accounts of isolation in university departments, gossip among faculty and department members, women getting pregnant just before their review for tenure, etc. Although they face the same type of oppression that women do among other professions, mothers in academia face a unique set of challenges and impasses.

Recent feminist scholarship on mothering shifts its gaze from the challenges of mothers in academia to the empowering dimensions of maternal identity in academia. In Mother outlaws: Theories and practices of empowered mothering, O’Reilly (2004) assesses the ways in which mothering can be empowering. In viewing feminist, lesbian and African America mothering as sites of resistance, O’Reilly puts forth a strong case for renewing our interest in how to shift our motherwork, rather than simply documenting the constraints of the patriarchal conditions under which we mother. Further, in her 2009 text, Feminist mothering in theory and practice, 1985-1995: A study in transformative politics, Fiona Green focuses on feminist mothers who take up the challenge of parenting in a way that is both self-empowering and transformative within a patriarchal context.

In O’Reilly’s 2006 book, Rocking the Cradle, and her 2008 book, Feminist Mothering, she argues that feminist mothers can transcend beyond the socially constructed confines of patriarchal motherhood. She actively reminds her readers that “how we live our lives, our opportunities, and ultimately our happiness—is really what is at stake in the feminist project”

MOTHER-SCHOLAR AND THE DISCIPLINE OF EDUCATION

I interrogate the invisibility of mother-scholars in the field of education. Mother-scholars posit that their unique ways of knowing begins to inform a critique of the field of education to safeguard those most affected: children.

Mother-scholars in the discipline of education present a unique maternal subject. They embody not only the maternal subject in the private sphere, but also the intellectual subject in a discipline that focuses primarily on children. This particular context provides rich terrain to realize how mothering and intellect confront and inform each other. Much like Ruddick’s contention that the intellectual consciousness...
required to raise children successfully is antithetical to peace, I argue that the intellectual consciousness required to raise children is antithetical to patriarchal foundations of schooling. Further, Ruddick suggests “Maternal practice responds to the historical reality of a biological child in a particular social world. The agents of maternal practice, acting in response to the demands of their children, acquire a conceptual scheme – the vocabulary and logic of connections – through which they order and express the facts and values of their practice” (1980, 97).

This brings me to the idea of maternal work as performance. Chandler (2007) argues that “mother is best understood as a verb, as something one does” (531). This borrows from Butler’s notion of performativity, which is critical in understanding the work of mother-scholars in education. Butler’s groundbreaking work sought to disrupt the connection between nature – biological sex – and gender identity. She therefore posited that the markers of gender that are generally externally presented are the result of ongoing repetitive acts and language that entrench particular identities and positions as normal. Butler sought to understand the ways that gender is about power and control rather than nature, arguing that the feminine or masculine subject was constructed, but constructed largely in adherence to a larger institutional system, betraying the systems of discourse that underpin and precede subject construction. Butler’s work is important in understanding what it means to be a mother-scholar because her notion of performativity reminds us that the individual subject and her actions are always occurring against the backdrop of a broader context. However, if performativity describes our ability to create ourselves publicly, how does this maternal performance shift in academia? Or in our children’s schools?

In following Butler’s notions of performativity, I view mother-scholars as constructed, rather than biologically created, and as unstable and incoherent subjects. I will consider the implications of academia and school sites on this ongoing project of performance and construction/deconstruction:

Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of genre relations? And is not such reification precisely contrary to feminist aims? To what extent does the category of women achieve stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix? If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reification of gender and identity, one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal (Butler, 1990, 9)

Another important consideration in investigating the performative and contextual subjectivity of mother-scholar is that the maternal subject is relational. Chandler takes up the idea of maternal subjectivity in the context of individualism. Chandler argues that the focus on women’s autonomous empowerment, characterizing much feminist theory, foregrounds individuality and is thus inconsistent with the lived experiences of motherhood. She suggests that we acknowledge mothers as subjects “in-relation” and that what is “problematic lies not in the equation of motherhood
with no subjectivity but in the privileging of an emancipated individuated subjectivity” (2007, 535). Chandler’s insights provide possibilities for a relational understanding of the maternal subject that acknowledges both the intrinsic dyadic nature of parenting vulnerable children unable to care for themselves, but also the implications of mothering undertaken in community and described in dialogue.

In the end, interpersonal relationality may threaten the stable maternal subject. If we consider that mother is something you do, rather than something you are, then we open up the depth and breadth of maternal thinking and performance. These mother-scholars build an alternate model of education grounded in their personal and professional relations with children.

Another unique aspect of the mother-scholar way of knowing and being in the discipline of education is the ability to mend the Cartesian split. Mother-scholars must mend the either/or binary of mind and reason versus body and emotion to preserve children. As scholars, we have been trained in the male logic of the mind for most of our academic career (in most cases, 20 plus years). We have become experts in reason, linearity, and scientific thoughts and methods. We do not discard them. But we are not wholly invested in them as mother-scholar.

This relates to the idea that mother-scholars inhabit an outsider-within space. Patricia Hill-Collins uses the trope to describe "the location of people who no longer belong to any one group," as well as "social locations or border spaces occupied by groups of unequal power" (5). Thus in her formulation, outsider-within refers not to mere duality/plurality, but the power relations which are implicated therein. Outsiders within are able to gain access to the knowledge of the group/community which they inhabit (or visit), but are unable to either authoritatively claim that knowledge or possess the full power given to members of that group.

Collins sees Black women as ideal outsider-within, in that they are both dually marginalized (as women and as Blacks), yet able to move among a variety of communities. She perceives the result of this boundary crossing to be a particular collective viewpoint known as the Black feminist standpoint. This kind of multiplicity is a fruitful theoretical location for Collins, because unlike elite or oppositional knowledge, derived from resisting only one kind of oppression, outsider-within positions "can produce distinctive oppositional knowledges that embrace multiplicity yet remain cognizant of power" (8).

Collins’ conception of outsider-within resonates with mother-scholars. We inhabit the halls of academia, gain knowledge of the academic community, but are ultimately unable, and more importantly, unwilling to access the full power of academe. Intellectually, we flourish in the outsider-within space. What is significant in our journeys as mother-scholars in the discipline of education is our unwillingness to become an insider. It would require a giving up of our emotional and spiritual trajectories that at this moment in our lives, would be intellectual suicide.

Mother-scholars are dedicated to destabilizing the androcentric impulse in schooling. This commitment proves that we actively seek social and political change in the field of education. With full recognition of the phenomenology of mother-scholars, we can reorient debates in education in a relevant way. Placing a
mother-scholar’s standpoint at the center of a story changes it profoundly. The following chapters extend the experiences of mothering as a vital site of empowerment and a locus for social change.

I’ve got the children to tend
The clothes to mend
The floor to mop
The food to shop
Then the chicken to fry
The baby to dry
I got company to feed
The garden to weed
I’ve got shirts to press
The tots to dress
The can to be cut
I gotta clean up this hut
Then see about the sick
And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine
Rain on me, rain
Fall softly, dewdrops
And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here
With your fiercest wind
Let me float across the sky
’Til I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes
Cover me with white
Cold icy kisses and
Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone
Star shine, moon glow
You’re all that I can call my own.

--Maya Angelou, Woman Work
CHAPTER 2

ANDROCENTRISM IN SCHOOLS

Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.

-- Simone de Beauvoir

Prior to discussing strategies for bringing mother-scholar epistemology into various dialogues in education, I shed light on some of the masculine underpinnings constricting the field of education. By drawing attention to the privileging of men’s knowledge and men's experiences, we see that male experiences have formed a basis of our knowledge in education.

Male Ways of Knowing

Androcentrism operates at the deepest level of Western educational thought. Androcentrism is the feminist-coined name given to the privileging of male experience, physiology, ideas, and conception of the world. The term was first used by early 20th century feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her work, Our Androcentric Culture, published in 1911. Androcentric ideology suggests that the world is owned economically and institutionally by men and that maleness is normative, or the universal standard by which everything is judged or perceived. Women are depicted and described by their difference/distance from men. Androcentrism is the unconscious, unquestioned, routine and ubiquitous centrality of men, maleness, and masculinity. As such, androcentrism is both limiting and harmful, for it reigns as a hegemonic circumscription of thought and expression.

Androcentrism asserts that men are naturally superior to women because they hold the natural capacity for reason. According to Enlightenment thinkers, women were not fit to be part of the political decision-making process primarily because they lacked the capacity for reason. Women’s natural capacity for reproduction made domesticity and childrearing their natural sphere of influence. Thus, women were defined by the biological function of their womb, rather than their intellectual capacity – woman was analogous to body, while man was analogous to mind. Man, the rational one, then uses his mind to create culture, while woman, the emotional and reproductive one, serves her biological function. Because man is the perceived rational creator of culture, women are associated with (or analogous to) nature. Because nature is seen as incomplete without man’s reason, women (as nature) were brought under the control of their fathers, husbands, the methodologies of science, or the State. Today, even though the feminist movement has had many successes in shifting androcentric thinking and challenging patriarchal culture, the consequences of androcentrism are pervasive in society, and for the purpose of this chapter, in our schools.
Strength, power, competitiveness, independence, and rationality, are all typically associated with men and masculinity. The domination of mind over body, will over passion, intellect over feeling, and competition over communion dominates schooling. In the following section, I highlight the pervasive educational tenet that mother-scholars intend to undermine: the bifurcation of body and mind.

**Binaries**

Integral to the workings of androcentric culture are a set of dualities that function as binary opposites:

- mind/body
- active/passive
- rational/irrational
- culture/nature
- public/private
- reason/emotion
- subject/object
- self/other

And underlying these, as the primary metaphor that links these concepts to bodies and inscribes them as more or less powerful: male/female. Androcentrism constructs difference as opposition, privileging one quality over the other as the normal, defining, positive term. It positions the second term as an absence of this quality – subordinate or lacking, only existing within this relationship and never able to be defined on its own terms. It then links the dominant terms with one particular sex. As Helene Cixous wrote in her essay, “Castration or Decapitation:”

> ...the whole conglomeration of symbolic systems – everything, that is, that’s spoken, everything that’s organised as discourse, art, religion, the family, language, everything that seizes us, everything that acts on us – it is all ordered around the hierarchical oppositions that come back to the man/woman opposition, an opposition that can only be sustained by means of a difference posed by cultural discourse as ’natural.’

For Cixous, this is an opposition founded in the **couple**. A couple posed in opposition, in tension, in conflict. To be aware, she continues, that it is the male/female couple that makes it all work is also to point to the fact that it is on the couple that we have to work if we are to deconstruct and transform culture.

**Bifurcation of Mind/Body in Education**

Boldt (2001), Nespor (1997), Phelan (1997), and Macrine (2002) claimed that schools work hard to differentiate and separate mind and body. This non-physical notion of the mind (i.e., Cartesian dualism) is pervasive in education. Grounded in the idea that we live in a bifurcated world, students are seen as incomplete,
immature savages, opposite self-contained, reflexive, ordered, rational, and male adults (Cannella, 1997). Thus, children must have the “right” bodily experiences so they can successfully develop into mature, self-contained adult bodies. This makes the student’s body a constant target for surveillance and control by teachers, administrators, other child experts, and curriculum designers (Bailey, 1998; Boldt, 2001; Leavitt & Power, 1997).

Educators insist that the student’s body must be disciplined and prepared for the civilized, ordered world. Schools persistently avoid lessons or activities that are physical in nature, instead struggling to teach students abstract concepts associated with the mind, such as mathematics, reading, and writing. By focusing on abstract concepts, schools are able to undermine the body, underscoring the dualistic notion that the mind (reason) is non-physical, thus superior.

Boldt (2001) contends that educators determine the overall success or failure of a student based on how that student’s body moves. The most successful bodies are those that sit still, attentive to the teacher’s lessons, demands, and instructions. For most educators, bodies seem to interfere with academic learning – active bodies do not promote academic success. Therefore, educators spend roughly 70 percent of their time disciplining bodies (Weinstein & Mignano, 1993, p. 97).

According to Kelly (1997), McWilliam and Jones (1996), Phelan (1997), and Todd (1997), the mind/body rupture eradicates the eros of pedagogy. Passions, desires, and pleasures are associated with bodies, making them irrational. In order to become rational, one must succumb solely to mind and disassociate oneself from body. The design and delivery of a body-less pedagogy negates the complexity and dynamics of pedagogy itself.

The mind/body split in education also results in the superiority of competition over communion. Mother-scholars question the scarcity (i.e., the notion that only a select few can succeed) in mainstream educational theory, and the assumption that only through competition do children achieve well being (Strober, 1987). By creating a scarcity of grades and other rewards, educators have grafted the notions of scarcity and competition onto the educational system. However, when we look at the nonmaterial world, we find many aspects of life that are not subject to the “laws” of scarcity – things like love and empathy. The failure of education to consider more empathetic approaches to schooling facilitates the norm that not everyone can have an “A,” some students must get lower grades. This norm is arbitrary, as it is socially constructed.

Human capital theory is what has ultimately gained currency in education. The subject areas that receive the greatest resources are those associated with earning a living. This means that a valuable education is that which increases students’ contribution in the market. The primary purpose of education is to produce as many productive workers as possible in a competitive labor force. Conversely, Kohn (1986) asserts, “Superior performance not only does not require competition; it usually seems to require its absence” (46-7). Through competition, students are unable to define themselves and discover their unique, personal means to happiness. Without rigorous, performance-based competition, students would be able to breathe and work at their own pace, ultimately elevating their level of
performance. The scarcity of “A’s” pushes students to repress their natural abilities, ultimately stifling their sense of self-worth.

Subjects that are not associated with vocational development find themselves starved for resources, particularly when it is necessary for educational institutions to tighten their belts. For example, since few people are able to earn a sufficient income through music, art, or theatre, these subjects are seen as unnecessary, solely yielding consumption benefits. In K-12 education, these classes are far more susceptible to budget cuts, unlike math or science, both viewed as central to preparation for work. Goleman (1995) asserts that programs teaching emotional intelligence are truly rare. This rarity is unacceptable, as happiness is more strongly related to factors like good health, self-esteem, a loving relationship, friendships, and challenging work with adequate leisure than it is to level of income (Myers 1992).

The mind/body split also results in the domination of the cognitive over the affective. In recent years, in K-12 education, the “accountability” movement’s interest in efficiency has manifested itself in standardized testing. Students often find themselves defined by their standardized tests scores, as their ability to pursue higher education, follow their dreams, or make the “first cut” when applying to schools depends heavily on their standardized test scores. These tests are viewed as reliable cognitive benchmarks of performance that should be administered regularly.

That being said, there is little or no evidence of concern regarding the negative effects of frequent testing on curriculum. For example, teachers teaching “to the test,” putting nothing into lesson plans except what will later require recall for their students’ standardized tests. This type of teaching is detrimental, as students are left with monotonous lessons and test-based knowledge. In addition, there is even less concern about the discouraging impasse that students face when they experience repeated failure, not ready or able to learn how to “master” these tests. Students feel worthless and self-defeated if they cannot conquer the standardized test (Diamond and Spillane 2004).

More empathetic modes of knowledge have been sacrificed as performance variables because they are too difficult to measure. These forms of knowledge include: affective knowledge (including self-esteem and caring about others), emotional intelligence (including anger management and interpersonal communication), the love of learning, the ability to express oneself in front of a group, the ability to relate to one’s peers, the ability to work cooperatively, and the ability to exercise creativity in problem solving. As a result of the aforementioned emphasis on cognitive efficiency and learning what can be easily measured (via standardized testing), there is, for example, very little in the secondary school curriculum that is geared toward simply having fun with learning, or appreciating learning for its own sake.

In a world where output is measured by performance on standardized tests, learning is seen as most efficient when teachers concentrate on cognitive learning
and disregard other learning outcomes. Standardized testing suggests that it does not matter how students feel about what they learn, or indeed how they feel about learning in general. What is important is that they be able to answer cognitive questions correctly on tests. But the separation of cognition and emotion in the quest to maintain an efficient learning space diminishes excitement in the classroom, ultimately contributing to students’ alienation from learning. This defeats one of the major purposes of education – namely, the foundation of a love of learning and a love of self.

Rupture

The feminist impulse to collapse the binary of mind and body can have a powerful effect in the field of education. Deconstructing a dualism requires releasing the idea that any one aspect – in this case, the cognitive mind – is the controlling, dominant, defining or superior aspect. The feminist critique is not to reverse this dichotomy, so that the repressed term becomes the dominant one, but to collapse them: to find ways of representing the world that might operate on different truths, that does not have to be defined within a hierarchical relationship of same/OPPOSITE (true/not-true), but can simply co-exist. In other words, to find a way of thinking difference so that it does not have to be either the One or the Other, but can be represented as simply two, or more – and with each able to be defined on its own terms.

Kirby (1997), along with the work of a number of other academic theorists in the past decade, suggests that effectively deconstructing mind/body split would necessarily involve conceiving of the body as more than just a passive material surface for the inscription of culture, but as having its own cognitive input. That is, to look at the whole question of how matter and intelligence is paired might entail looking at the dynamic two-way conversation between mind and body.

In western culture, part of the legacy of the mind/body split is that emotions are often seen as the enemy of truth or reason. Being emotional is generally considered to be synonymous with being irrational. As a mother-scholar, I find myself becoming more and more astonished at the lack of the terms ‘emotion’ or ‘spirit’ (or ‘affect’) in the indexes of the majority of books on K-12 education. I argue that reason (too much of it) is the enemy of good education. Education is about passion, sensuality, emotion and instinct: all associated with the body. The mind/body split here becomes a deleterious struggle between the head and the heart, between analysis and creativity.

Deconstructing the dualism releases the idea that any one aspect – in this case, the cognitive mind – is the controlling, dominant, defining or superior aspect. What I argue instead, is that the way to collapse the notion of two separate things might not be to fuse them into one (separate) thing, but to explode them into multiple things. As everything and nothing – that is, nothing separate.