



Teacher, Scholar, Mother: Re-Envisioning Motherhood in the Academy

Young, Anna M., ed.

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Book Review

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Teacher, Scholar, Mother accomplishes its stated goal – to re-envision motherhood in the Academy. The grim statistics facing women in the Academy who are (or wish to be) mothers are not mere numbers, but a lived reality for many, either personally or through the lives of colleagues. These facts mirror institutional, social, and cultural inequities that cause “the consistent talent leak in the professional pipeline” (Young, ix) which forces so many scholar-mothers to leave the Academy. While this grim reality may not be changing fast enough, the essays in this volume offer fresh and innovative perspectives that address these challenges with fortitude and vision; therefore, this book is a must-read for those in the field of higher education – administrators, male and female colleagues, teacher-scholar-mothers, and graduate students.

The seven essays in “Section 1: Motherhood, Feminism, and Gendered Work” explore the “pipeline problem” through multiple theoretical and disciplinary approaches. Andrea Hunt argues that the normative ideologies reinforcing separate models of gendered work need to change to integrative models which can “help lay the groundwork for a new model of academic life and work-family balance” (10). Tracy Rundstrom Williams’ essay examines the confusing rhetoric and divisive language on breastfeeding which can undermine women’s confidence. “Mama’s Boy” poignantly discusses issues of masculinity, mothering, and white privilege through an interview conducted by feminist scholar Catherine MacGillivray with her son Merlin, a conversation that continues with an added interlocutor – Merlin’s step-father, Jason Fly – in “Mama’s Boy II” (section 3). Erin Tremblay Ponnou-Delaffon turns to Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy on encountering the Other as a model to re-envision reading, writing, teaching, and parenting. Susan Iverson and Christin Seher’s qualitative study of mothers’

sabbatical experiences accounts for disciplinary distinctions between Humanities and STEM faculty and suggests that faculty professional development must consider needs of academic mothers in sabbatical planning. Brook Sattler, Jennifer Turns, and Cynthia Atman explore motherhood from an engineering design perspective as an opportunity for reflection and self-authorship. Dustin Harp's essay critically analyzes how media consumption shapes our lives and understandings of gender and identity.

The five essays in "Section 2: Identity and Performance in Academic Motherhood" document case studies of teacher-mother-scholars. Sara Childers's essay queries the performative alignment between the objects and actions of motherhood and scholarship. Reflecting on her own subject position, M. Cristina Alcalde's piece engages literature on non-violent masculinities to develop theories to create a safer world for today's youth. Allison Antink-Meyer shows how the epistemology of science can be a bridge to connect the historical gap between the culture of academia and family-life. Erin Graybill Ellis and Jessica Smartt Gullion's ground-breaking study examines how graduate student mothers negotiate the conflicting roles of "good mother" and "good graduate student." The final contribution in this section, by Caroline Smith and Celeste Hanna, argues that Betty Draper of AMC's television series, *Mad Men*, should be recognized as a cultural icon rather than the world's worst mother.

The essays in Section 3 give voice to topics frequently silenced in the Academy. Elisabeth Kraus poignantly shares her experiences to give new life to the narrative of stillbirth. Marissa McClure's article "s/m/othering" addresses infertility and cultural constructions of motherhood through artistic practice and academia. Ama Oforiwa Aduonum's article, written in a mix of prose and verse, voices institutional and cultural biases that can support and also hinder mother-scholars in Ghana and the U.S. In "Dropped Stitches," Martha Kalnin Diede weaves together stories of female monsters, challenges of motherhood in the Academy, and fighting cancer. Layne Parish Craig analyzes narratives on IVF and Assisted Reproduction Therapy (ART) that disrupt the heteronormative focus on infertility. The essays in the section are especially welcome as fresh approaches to underrepresented topics in the Academy.

Read as a whole, these essays are greater than the sum of the parts despite the fact that the arrangement of the articles seems extemporaneous - for example, the addendum interview by MacGillivray in section 3, and Ama Oforiwa Aduonum's article on identity and performance which would have been more suited to section 2. This minor point aside, *Teacher, Scholar, Mother* is a refreshing must-read that intelligently re-envisioning motherhood in the Academy.

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