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**Teaching Through the Mother:
An Interpretive Look
At
How Becoming a Mother Changes Teaching**

by

Michelle Vanden Berg

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a hermeneutic interpretation of how becoming a mother changes teaching. It explores the phenomenon as it has presented itself in the lives of two particular women, attempting to reflect life as it is actually lived. The interpretation is broadened by the relevant literature in the fields of education, women's studies, nursing, critical and feminist pedagogy, and hermeneutics. The challenge of postmodern texts is addressed, as is the deliberate choice to focus on women, mothers, and female teachers. Issues of empathy, boundaries, identity, and the repositioning of the world's children were the focal themes raised through the research process. Personal experiences, the research, and the literature are woven together to illuminate the transformative nature of becoming a mother and what, when the mother returns to her work as a teacher, these transformations may come to mean to her educative tasks, to the children, and to herself.

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This work is dedicated to my children. But as much as this project reaches forward into their future, it also reaches backward into my own childhood, and to my first teachers, my parents. It is from my own mother, Sharon Yeo, that I first understood what it is to be a mother. My father, Walt Yeo, instilled in me a deep appreciation of education and a love of learning for its own sake.

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DEDICATION

To my daughters, Emily Rose and Amy Maria, who have made me a mother.

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CHAPTER ONE

A BEGINNING

When a woman becomes a mother, it is a transformation, which reverberates profoundly through her experiences (Bergum, 1989). Becoming a mother changes a woman's life drastically – practically, emotionally -- in the way that she sees herself and others. It is a milestone that brings to the foreground many significant issues about her relationship to children. We may see things differently, read the world more deeply, see the world's children in an altered light:

To respond to the promise of birth is to respect a birthing woman's hope in her infant and her infant's hope in the world. . . . Birth is both in the world and a world's beginning. (Ruddick, 1989, p. 218)

As a student-teacher, I remember feeling at a disadvantage because I did not have children of my own. I remember, in those chaotic, terrifying days, how I felt that others with children had more personal insight and experience with children and their development, and that they would better be able to understand parents. I remember saying this to my practicum supervisor, and her telling me that she thought one could be quite a good teacher without having children of one's own, and that what changed for her with the birth of her son was being able to understand how precious each child was to their parents.

Obviously, there are many excellent teachers who are not parents. Yet, with the birth of my daughters, I know that my life changed profoundly and this has changed who I am as teacher. Yes, it has helped me to empathize with the parental perspective and experience the development of children first hand.

But there is something more, something deeper. My child has positioned me differently as a teacher to the children of others. The questions underlying this thesis began with my own experience of the transformation which motherhood brought to my thinking. After my first child was born, I continued my graduate work while taking time away from teaching to be with my daughter. Pregnant again, I embarked on my thesis. My second daughter was born amidst research and writing. So alongside mothering I have attempted to think more deeply about teaching, about children, about pedagogy. And mothering has required a changed view. I am not only talking about how having children in the house interrupts and reorganizes my life. It is the profound redefinition and transformation of self, and thus of the self as teacher, that I wish to explore in this project.

There are those who will question and challenge my choice to focus on mothers rather than including fathers, and on female teachers rather than all teachers. For both fathers and mothers there are many common elements experienced in becoming parents; fatherhood is equally important and worthy of our interest. Throughout this thesis, there are times when I may refer to parents rather than mothers alone, and this is because there are certain commonalities, places where the experiences of fathers and mothers slip over and around one another. David Jardine (1992) calls our attention to the transformation that the birth of a child necessitates for each of us, male or female, from his perspective as a father:

The birth of my son transformed me into being a father, and my father into being a grandfather. Paradoxically, then, my son regenerated what I have come to understand the course of my life to have already been. He

constitutes not simply the addition of one new, isolated element in a chain of events. He constitutes the necessity to re-think the whole chain and each event in it. (p.56)

As certainly as there are commonalities however, there is also profound difference in the experience of mothers and fathers. Beginning with the physical process of pregnancy and childbirth, and continuing with the highly gendered experience of mothering as it functions in society, a woman who mothers experiences parenthood differently than a man who fathers.

Even men who have been primarily responsible for mothering their children insist they are not mothers. Even women sympathetic to the idea of mothering as genderless work worry that a genderless mother trivializes both the distinctive costs of mothering to women as well as the effects, for worse and for better, of femininity on maternal practice and thought. (Ruddick, 1989, p. xiii)

Teaching is a deep expression of our personal selves; you teach who you are (Ayers, 1992; Grumet, 1988; Miller, 1992). This thesis (perhaps somewhat stubbornly) focuses on the experience of becoming a mother, and how that experience influences the woman as teacher. I have done this for three reasons. First, it is the way in which I have experienced the world as woman, early childhood teacher, and mother, and in writing of it, I cannot assume that the male experience is equivalent. Second, teaching, particularly of young children, is a largely genderized profession; in most cases throughout the world it is women who have taken on this responsibility. Finally, it is to help give voice to the experiences of women, a project taken up by feminists but never complete due to centuries of silenced voices. Women's experiences and

ways of living in the world continue to be marginalized, and pretending their equivalence to the experiences of men in order to proclaim women's equality does not honour our realities.

"We" – meaning by "we" a whole made up of body, brain, and spirit, influenced by memory and tradition – must still differ in some respects from "you," whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained and so differently influenced by memory and tradition. Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes. (Woolf, 1938, pp. 33-34)

The choice to focus on women and mothers does not intend to exclude or to minimize the equally important experience of fathering, but rather, to call attention to the unique way in which women experience the world. Making this choice is to avoid the emulsifying effect of gender neutrality (Grumet, 1988, p. xix). As women and men we are connected, but being connected,

is not to be the same as. To be different is not to be less powerful than, less worthy than, less present than. Difference need not be shameful, but it will continue to be so long as connection is repressed. (Pagano, 1990, p. 137)

Madeleine Grumet (1988) writes with great insight on the topic of what it means to be a mother, and how teaching young children is the work of women rather than simply "women's work". She writes of how soon after the birth of her first child she felt so connected to the infant that she was startled by the sight of her own face in a mirror, expecting to see the face of her daughter. Grumet alludes to the profound physical processes of pregnancy, childbirth, and

mothering an infant. It changes the texture of one's days and experiences. As a pregnant teacher, I wrote:

The anticipation of this new life. . . has changed my teaching, changed the way I see the children. Now I feel the baby's movements throughout my day. It is a secret joy, as I read to my class or listen to a child, a surprise to feel the dance within my womb of this child, yet unseen, yet unknown. It sweetens my work and weighs it with deeper significance.

The pain and joy of childbirth, pushing out a baby from within to the world changed me irrevocably. I knew I could never again be the same person as I was. For weeks I had to tell and retell the story of my labour to anyone who would listen. And here I am, telling it once again, because it is the grand event in the process which made me mother.

The child is mine. This child is me. The woman who bears a child first experiences its existence through the transformations of time and space in her own body. . . .The pressure of labour and the wrenching expulsion of the infant (the term "delivery" must have been created by those who receive the child, not those who release it) physically recapitulate the terrors of coming apart, of losing a part of oneself. The symbiosis continues. (Grumet, 1988, p. 10)

This resonated so familiarly with my experience. It is indeed strange how the child, whose body is now separate from mine, somehow is still me. I am connected, not just emotionally, but in a profoundly physical way. As each daughter grows older I imagine this impression fading, in each becoming truly "other". But for now we live in this wonderful space between self and other. And living in this space has required a shift in how I see all others.

I wonder if other women have this experience. I know that many hear echoes of themselves in my story. I also know that there are challengers to my voice and the voices of writers such as Grumet. In researching this phenomenon, I am seeking to hear some of these other voices. I am seeking to expand and illuminate how new motherhood influences teaching, to find out how other women experience it, to thread between us the commonalities, to cast the images of unique experiences, which may be woven together to create a whole.

In talking about my thesis topic to mothers who are teachers, I am always taken aback by their often intense and immediate identification with this work. The reactions of women encountered in casual conversation have already hinted at many layers to this phenomenon. They say different things, but all are very definite about a dramatic shift in their teaching -- new perspectives, emotions, sensitivities, understandings, limitations. One teacher laughingly said that she wishes she could call every parent of every child from her classes before she had her own children -- so that she could apologize!

What does this phenomenon mean? How can exploring it enrich our lives, and allow us to live more gracefully, with ourselves, with our children, with our students, and with each other? Grumet expresses the intensity and silences of teaching:

In this text I am attempting to understand what teaching means to women. . . . There is something about the task itself, the way it wedges itself into our lives, the way we place it somewhere between our work and our labour, our friendships and our families, our ambition and our self-abnegation, that has prohibited our speaking of it. (1988, p. xi)

I have experienced this "wedging" also, as have many teachers.

Teachers often speak of the work load of teaching, of how fatiguing it can be, of how it trickles into family life, of burn out, of stress. Yet truly, it is not the hours, nor is it the preparation or the multitude of details that must be attended to. If this were the case, teaching would be little different from a host of other full time professions. I have come to believe it has more to do with the nature of the work itself, how it gets under your skin and haunts you, how once begun you can never quite cease being a teacher, any more than you could cease being a mother, sister, daughter. Perhaps, as Grumet suggests, it is the acknowledgment of this particular relationship of our work to our lives that has the potential to liberate us. Teaching is more than a job, a career, even perhaps a profession. It is instead a way of being with others that requires a special sensitivity to the world, to oneself, to those others; it is deeply personal, historical, spiritual. It is perhaps our modern attempt to reduce teaching to its technicalities that has drained it of lifeblood, leaving stress and burn out in its wake. Grumet writes of how we must reclaim the intentionality of teaching, to create a space for it in our lives and in our classrooms. Perhaps becoming a mother significantly changes that intentionality. Not necessarily to something better, but to a place where we have a heightened awareness of how much is at stake.

Part of the reason I and many others choose to teach is that we hope to make a difference. We hope to make the world a better, more caring and hopeful place. We hope to give to children the richness we possess; we hope to give children the benefit of both the love we received and the love we lacked. Sometimes, in the weariness of days too full or wasted or discouraging, it is

difficult to imagine where that difference is felt. In allowing our lives as mothers to influence our teaching, in allowing our own children to inform our work with the children of others, we become more genuine. The purpose of this project is to uncover the ways this experience of teaching in the midst of mothering manifests itself for women -- to uncover what it means to them, to capture the porous moments when it slips into their awareness, to reveal the ways in which the mother journeys her way into teaching.

CHAPTER TWO

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Once living the question of how mothering influences teaching, I slowly became aware of a body of literature that enriched, challenged, and extended my thinking on the topic. There were many perspectives that existed surrounding the question. This topic summoned issues of identity, both of teachers and of mothers, of gender, of feminism, of emancipation, of appropriate knowledge. There were questions raised that continue to challenge this work. If my personal experiences served as the catalyst for my question, the literature served as the foundation from which the research was generated. Although these voices from the field will be invited into the conversation I hold with the participants in the chapters that follow; it is important to first explore the landscape within which the question was conceived.

Transformations

One major work underpinning this project comes from the field of nursing, entitled Woman to Mother: A Transformation, by Vangie Bergum (1989). Bergum traces the narratives of six women undergoing this transformation, through pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering their infants. She delves deeply into the experiences of birth, and differing philosophies and practices. She hears the voices of the mothers -- how they now see children differently, how they feel differently about themselves, and how the love for her own child transforms a woman. Her book illustrates how qualitative inquiry into this kind

of question can open up the topic and enrich our understanding and sensitivity to a phenomenon:

The transformative experience that is accessible to women who become mothers has been the central focus of this book. The conversations with women have opened ways to explore what it means to become a mother, requiring a questioning of the forms of knowledge used by women to understand themselves as mothers. Being a mother is a matter not only of the mother role. . . not only of caring for the child, not only of caring for a home. It *is* a matter of a changed understanding of who women *are* as mothers. Becoming a mother is a matter not only of maternal tasks, not only of developmental tasks, not only of stressors and satisfactions. It is a realization and acceptance that "*I am* a mother." (Bergum, 1989, p. 150)

The experience of giving birth and becoming a mother changed me in a dynamic and permanent way. I have spent the time since exploring this transformation, and asking questions about what it will mean to me as a teacher. Since it has transformed me, it will transform my teaching. Many of the other women I have talked to about this phenomenon have responded excitedly; they too found that becoming a mother made teaching altogether different. One colleague immediately responded: "Before I had the baby my belief system was like this (making a vertical motion with her hand) -- and now it's like this (changing the gesture to a horizontal one)." These responses have been encouraging; they have supported my belief that there is something common, something important, a story here that needs to be told.

In the midst of my first pregnancy, it was with great interest that I began my study of the critical curriculum theory of Madeleine Grumet through her book Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching (1988). During my first year teaching young

children, I became fascinated with the teaching relationship. I was fulfilled by the closeness I developed with the children in my class, and astonished by the emptiness their absence created when they left me for grade one. I became interested in how my own life and experiences wove themselves through the craft of teaching, and how my own mother and my relationship with her were somehow intertwined with the life of my classroom. Grumet writes deeply about this topic, drawing complex inferences and conclusions, drawing on the research and thoughts of many writers, making explicit and significant this experience of womanhood within teaching. Many of her ideas struck me and informed my work as a teacher of young children, and now inform this project.

Grumet begins with a story about the women of Sri Lanka, describing the ritual drinking of bitter milk (a mixture of milk and crushed margosa leaves) by adolescent girls trying to cope with separation from their families, "the same bitter potion that mothers apply to their nipples when they wish to wean their babies" (p. xi). I was intrigued by this image. Grumet is not idealizing motherhood, making some kind of simple assertion of how the sweetness of motherhood relates to the classroom. Clearly here is something more complex:

Bitter milk, fluid of contradictions: love and rejection, sustenance and abstinence, nurturance and denial. . . . The phrase. . . contains the contradictions of my work and of the work of many other women and men who teach. I have written this book to explore these contradictions. In this text I am attempting to understand what teaching means to women. Women constitute the majority of all public school instructional personnel; nevertheless, our experience of this work is hidden. . . .

Sometimes it seems to me that it is everything that could possibly matter to us. (Grumet, 1989, p. xi)

The Postmodern Challenge

If Grumet's work supports my research, postmodern theory presents a thoughtful challenge to this project. Attracted by the postmodern vision of the world as kaleidoscope, as heteroglossia, as multiple narratives, as not only having differing experiences of reality but of experiencing differing realities altogether, I became curious as to what insights it might bring to bear on my work. The postmodern viewpoint deconstructs ideas of the essential nature of women, of motherhood, and of teaching. It questions any view of common experiences. It has required me to question my project, to address the essential versus constructed nature debate, and to decide how I will respond to this challenge.

Impositions

An essay by Janice Jipson entitled "Teacher-Mother: An Imposition of Identity" (1995), is an example of this postmodern questioning from a critical perspective. She describes a journey that relates to these questions of essentialism and the appropriateness of mothering in the classroom. It is the story of her experience, which began in trying to teach more gently as a woman, not wanting to buy into the patriarchal structures she found herself in, particularly in the university setting. Initially, she became concerned with the issue of "imposition" -- the imposition of our notions and deadlines and authority into our students' lives.

Should I lecture? Who am I to assume to be the expert? Certainly students have a lot to offer on this topic, too. Assignment? Of course you can turn it in tomorrow. Who am I to say that my seminar paper is more important than your trip to Denver/mother's birthday/statistics course/

child's band concert? And besides, what right do I have to be the validator of your work? Appointment? Well, Friday is my writing day, but your needs are important to me -- so let's meet! (Jipson, 1995, p. 22)

Jipson begins to explore her development into a woman who nurtures, and the formation of her beliefs that demanded her to become the "teacher-mother". She tells us that "when I did become a teacher, the metaphor of teacher as mother seemed unquestionable for me -- particularly since the beginning of my teaching career coincided with the birth of my two daughters" (1995, p. 24). She traces her journey through both her family life as a child and the literature that influenced her, including Grumet's Bitter Milk. But her journey is one of having come to question these assumptions and values, to begin to see the feminine role of nurturance as yet another imposition.

I liked the image of myself as mother-sugar, the nurturer and caretaker of my own children, my friends and family, and even my students. I did not ask myself if mothering was what my students wanted or consider my complicity in continuing to impose traditional and essentialized ways of being. (Jipson, 1995, p. 24)

I have to ask myself if I too am guilty. Is this what has happened to me? Is my belief in the profound connection between my life as a teacher and as a mother oppressive to myself and others? Am I being blind to the way in which I am serving the patriarchal structure, rather than creating a space outside it as I had hoped?

Jipson traces how she continued to read theorists that supported her conception of herself as teacher-mother, teacher-nurturer. She adds a second metaphor, that of midwife -- another gentle, feminine art that brings out our nurturing qualities -- an image of women helping women, bringing children into

the world in a partnership with the birthing woman. She writes in more detail about how Grumet spoke to her: "She anticipates my recurring desire to contextualize my own work, even here, through stories about my mother, my grandmothers, and my children" (1995, p. 27). Her ideas crystallized in a project that attempted to epitomize how she framed herself as teacher. It was a "Teacher as Mother" Seminar, interested in "uniting theory, fiction, and personal life experience in a way that validated participants and empowered them to become active agents in changing their own teaching and that of their schools" (p. 29). It didn't turn out the way she had hoped, however. She discovered that the way in which she had positioned herself as teacher-mother held many inherent conflicts. She was still the teacher, but tried to give all that power to the students. She came to see that some students found her "connected teaching style" to be impositional.

Was I doing connected teaching right? . . . In retrospect, my certainty about what they should do. . . seemed inappropriate, an unpardonable imposition. I began to realize that in even simple interactions with the students, the imposition of my ideas, my values, and my stories would occur. The power I carried as a teacher. . . could not be denied. (Jipson, 1995, p. 31)

This experience caused her to reconstruct her conceptions of teaching as mothering. It required her to see her complicity in patriarchy by taking up the mother's role as opposite the father's. It required her to see nurturance as imposition. Jipson now questions our essential natures as women, and has shifted now to seeing teaching as a *political* act, an act for change.

Personal Investments

I wonder; must I do the same? Am I following in the same journey, one that must eventually disillusion me as to the connections between women, between teaching and mothering? Is my love for and involvement with my children simply muddying up my conceptions of teaching? Am I, too, being naive in seeing connected experiences amongst women? By doing this am I perpetuating the patriarchy, which oppresses our socialized feminine roles and makes us second best? Is there any such thing as intrinsic femininity? Is there anything common, anything irreducible, about being a woman, mother, teacher?

I shared a course paper about this question of mothering and teaching with my graduate seminar group in early childhood education, wanting to open it to discussion. Five out of the six women seemed to identify immediately to my experience of profound connection to my children, of seeing the world's children differently now that I have my own children, and of the intense conflict I feel in finding a balance between my time with my daughters and my time studying. One woman described the pain she felt at leaving her six-month-old child in the care of another when she went back to work. Another woman explained that she simply resigned after her first child was born. A third talked about how she felt completely wrapped up in her children and unable to follow intellectual pursuits for the couple of years surrounding the birth of her children. The member of our group who does not have children of her own imagined the difference it might make in being able to empathize with parents. And all of these stories were akin to what I have been experiencing. I want to extend this into exploring how this new frame for my life changes me as a teacher -- it will not leave unaffected how I care for the children of others. But the last member

of our group challenged us and questioned our assumptions. Her experience was different. A dedicated mother and teacher, she could not "stand" staying at home, and was back at work within six weeks. It was the way in which she needed to care for her child by caring for herself. She found a nurturing place for her child during the day with a neighbour. Yet, the same mother has a strong ethic of care in her teaching, immersed in writers such as Nel Noddings, always considering how she may better respect children and their needs. Our friend challenged our assumption that our experiences of motherhood were in some way universal, and questioned how much our feelings were socially and culturally bound. Jipson echoes her question, when she realized:

I had, for most of my life, assumed without question that mothering and teaching were the nurturant work of women. While this relationship was undoubtedly imposed upon my thinking by traditional cultural expectations and by my own familial experience, I resisted examining it critically. Its functionality in scripting my life was too comfortable. (1995, p. 25)

The Essentialist / Constructionist Debate

These ideas were seriously challenging my assumptions, values, and beliefs. Not yet willing to give my own experience away as being "just subjective experience," and having found so many women who resonated with the teaching and mothering interconnections in their lives, I felt I had to look more closely at the heart of this challenge, and ask what was at its root. It seemed to me that the whole thing hinges on another version of the nature/nurture debate -- Ernest Jones's question: "Is woman born or made?"

Grumet is helpful with an in-depth exploration of the psychoanalytic background to gender. Influenced heavily by Chodorow's The Reproduction of Mothering (1978), Grumet traces the family relationships of infants as they develop through the preoedipal stage. She tells the story of the birth of her first child, and talks about the sense a mother has of "This child is mine. This child is me" (p. 10). She goes on to discuss the inferential nature of paternity, and the father's turning to the public world. Grumet also establishes a significant building block for the rest of Bitter Milk by accepting the difference, even in infancy, in the relationship between mothers and their infants of both sexes. Adopting Chodorow, the idea here is that the mother perceives the daughter as "same" and identifies with her, but in perceiving the son as "different", as "sexually other", alters the nature of her contact. This situation results in a myriad of implications, the girl, growing up less differentiated than the boy; the boy, growing up repressing his identification with the mother. These seem difficult ideas, perhaps because they are outside our ability to remember, outside our conscious perception of our family relationships, yet influence whom each of us has become.

There would be no point in making reference to our own situations, for it is obvious that there are no remote, authoritarian fathers, no binding, seductive mothers among the readers of this feminist study of education. The analysis is structural and thematic and, as such, abuses the specificity of each of us even as it respects our privacy and defenses. (Grumet, 1988, p. 9)

It appears to be a deeply dividing issue particularly in the feminist community, this question of whether womanhood is in some way essential or whether gender is socialized independently from sex (constructionism). I turned

to Diana Fuss and her very complete discussion of this debate in her book Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference (1989). This is a rethinking of the debate that seeks to deconstruct its binarism, juxtapose the two sides and show "how essentialism and constructionism are deeply and inextricably co-implicated with each other" (p. xii). Her chapter entitled "The 'Risk' of Essence," seeks to define the two key positions, and to show their strengths, weaknesses, and most importantly their interdependencies.

Essentialism may be at once more intractable and more irrecoverable than we thought; it may be essential to our thinking while at the same time there is nothing "quintessential" about it. To insist that essentialism is always and everywhere reactionary is, for the constructionist, to buy into essentialism in the very act of making the charge; *it is to act as if essentialism has an essence*. (Fuss, 1989, p. 21)

In "Reading Like a Feminist," Fuss further explores the tensions within and surrounding feminism in this debate. What does it mean to "read like a woman," to "read like a man?" Can a man read like a woman if he chooses to? Can he read like a feminist? She makes the point that anti-essentialist feminists still sometimes try to exclude men from feminism -- on the basis of nature. Do all women read the same, or are we assuming a homogeneity that clearly does not exist? Where are we united, what marks the line where we divide? She writes:

Can we ever speak so simply of "the female reader" or "the male reader," "the woman" and "the man," as if these categories were not transgressed, not already constituted by other axes of difference (class, culture, ethnicity, nationality. . .)? Moreover, are our reading responses really so easily predictable, so readily interpretable? (Fuss, 1989, p. 28)

Fuss continually plays one side of the debate off the other and illuminates how they are intertwined, interdependent, inextricable. She derives a contention that echoes Jipson's journey, that feminism is not perhaps dependent on theories of nature and difference, but that feminism at *its* essence is political: in nature, in purpose, and in ethic. She points out that "it is difficult to imagine a *non-political* feminism" (p. 37). She suggests that women are bound not by their natural sex but are united in a particular time and place by their gender and the subsequent, politicized consequences:

Many anti-essentialists fear that positing a political coalition of *women* risks presuming that there must first be a natural class of women; but this belief only masks the fact that it is coalition politics which constructs the category of women (and men) in the first place. Retaining the idea of women as a class, if anything, might help remind us that the sexual categories we work with are no more and no less than social constructions, subject-positions subject to change and to historical evolution. (Fuss, 1989, p. 36)

Having posited the political underpinnings of feminism, Fuss poses an implicit debate between an anti-essentialist materialist, and an essentialist psychoanalytic philosopher. "Each chapter attempts to refigure and, in effect, to compensate for the prevalent poststructuralist understanding of the essentialist constructionist polemic" (p. xiii). The final three chapters move the theoretical into the urgently political, to the areas of race, homosexuality, and pedagogy. She traces the way in which the essentialism debate weaves its way through these issues, never in the same form, continually dividing those united and uniting the divided. The chapter that was of particular interest to my search was the last, "Essentialism in the Classroom."

Nowhere are the related issues of essence, identity, and experience so highly charged and so deeply politicized as they are in the classroom. Personal consciousness, individual oppressions, lived experience -- in short, identity politics -- operate in the classroom both to authorize and to de-authorize speech. "Experience" emerges as the essential truth of the individual subject, and personal "identity" metamorphoses into knowledge. Who we are becomes what we know. (Fuss, 1989, p. 113)

Fuss becomes very concerned with this issue of experience inherent in essentialism, the way in which essence disguises itself under the "authority of experience." She relates how in her classrooms she has noticed how the relation of a personal story can completely halt a discussion. It is as though in acknowledging the truth of another's experience, in not invalidating what they clearly have found to be true in their own life, it becomes impossible to challenge and to debate. "The appeal to experience, as the ultimate test of all knowledge, merely subtends the subject in its fantasy of autonomy and control" (p. 114). It is interesting how even practices intended to give people voice can ultimately be another technology of power. But perhaps there are different ways to use story and experience, perhaps there is a difference between the stories we share and the ones that are just about me. We cannot allow the classroom and the university to become a talk show, where everyone has their own opinion and in the end nothing has been said. (Is that what I am doing? Just playing talk show host? And how will I know when there is something in my story which needs to be told, and when I'm just talking?)

In the end, Fuss advocates intervening in the stalemate of the essentialism/constructionism debate, in becoming unparalyzed and recognizing each position's internal contradictions and political investments. It would seem

that this embraces the postmodern practices of rejecting binarism and turning away from master narratives that seek to verify a certain way of knowing -- knowing woman as definitively born or made.

Coming to Terms

Having come this far, I am still left with a sense of disquiet in my need to come to terms with where I might stand and live within this question of essentializing women. It becomes "essential" to my questions about teaching and mothering. And I don't want this story to become just "my" story. Yet when I begin to think in terms of deconstructing ideas and idealizations of women and motherhood, I continue to remember the resonances of conversations where women could speak together and understand one another. And even if our connections are socialized, does it make them invalid? I find myself returning to Grumet, and wondering on which side of the debate she would be placed. It seems as though the psychoanalytic root of her analysis of difference could be read as living in a space between -- we are born sexed creatures, and then that sex makes a difference to our mothers. This difference is not chosen: not right, not wrong. It is this difference, and its consequences, which initially reproduce gender. "For the infant there is only the mother" (Grumet, 1988, p. 12).

Mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with, themselves. Correspondingly, girls tend to remain part of the dyadic primary mother-child relation itself. This means that a girl continues to experience herself as involved in issues of merging and separation, and in an attachment characterized by primary identification and object choice. . . . A boy has engaged and been required to engage in a more emphatic individuation and a more defensive firming of ego

boundaries. . . from very early then, because they are parented by a person of the same gender, girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object world and as differently oriented to their inner object world as well. (Chodorow, 1978, pp. 166-7)

A friend, whose son was born a month after my daughter, made a fascinating comment that brought Grumet's contention home to me. We were talking about whether it was different to bear and care for a boy than a girl; my friend was also mother to a five-year-old girl. She said that it often seemed impossible to her that her body could have produced this male child, and that, "Every time I change his diaper, I'm surprised." There is something about this recognition about sexual difference that seems to me to be significant, both for the mother and for the child. The beginnings of a genderized experience of the world form, but they are not specific to a historical time and place. It begins at home, in the mother's fluid identity with the daughter, with the "surprise" at the son. This process is essential, but perhaps unavoidable.

Particularity

In the weeks before my first baby was born, I read as much as I could about the birth and what I could expect afterwards. Pregnancy seemed an experience of mystery, carrying this child whom I knew yet did not know. I read that many women feel depressed after the birth, those infamous "baby blues". Like many "female problems", this was attributed mostly to hormones and the remainder to exhaustion. But one text I encountered talked about this depression as a period of adjustment, where the mother must give up the dream child she has carried through her pregnancy and learn to know and care for the

real child as she or he presents him or herself, especially if the sex of the baby is other than the mother anticipated. This depression can sometimes be a period of mourning for that baby which existed so powerfully in the mind. It is also, in a sense, grieving for the first separation between mother and child, that separation of the body.

Last night, lying in a hot, white-foamed tub, I was suddenly pregnant with you again. I wept, aware that you no longer slept beneath my heart.

(Chesler, 1979, p. 281)

A friend said, "It's so strange, how you leave the house one person, and come back two." It is in getting to know one's unique, particular baby, who presents his or herself in the moment of birth, that the mother-child bond is formed. Being a mother is loving a very particular baby, like no other, yours and no one else's.

In the practice of mothering, the child has a real claim on the mother.

This claim is emotional and physical as well as moral. This claim is not experienced as limiting, rather it provides meaning, purpose, and identity. . . . The mother does not view her child as an autonomous equal deserving of care by virtue of his or her rights. Meaningful family traditions (understood as practical and not cognitive knowledge) and common sense, based on the mother's own intuitive understanding of *her* child, figure as a resource more prominently than prescriptive child development manuals in guiding her care. Her practice is particular to her own infant. The practice itself provides the paramount satisfaction.

(Wynn Leonard, 1996, p. 129)

This has interesting ramifications for the teacher, both concerning own child and the children of the other. She does not respond to the children of the other in exactly the same way, yet she perhaps has greater insight into other mother-

child relationships. Her experience of this multiplicity has postmodern echoes, particularly if she experiences her roles in a fragmentary way.

Women Who Teach

Jo Anne Pagano enters the conversation in Exiles and Communities: Teaching in the Patriarchal Wilderness (1990). She calls on Grumet (1988), Jane Roland Martin (1985), and others, including students, colleagues, and notably women of fiction, to help uncover what it means to be a woman and a teacher. She is, as she writes, a teacher in spite of being a woman, not because of it (p. xiii). As a woman, a teacher, and a wife, she has much to say to women about the way in which we enter the world.

Like Chodorow, like Grumet, Pagano sees important truths in understanding those early experiences of pre-oedipal attachment and the oedipal separation and its contingent angers, desires, repressions, and fears. Beyond Freud, she understands the female experience of never really separating from the mother and the choice that the girl often makes to sever herself and join her father's world but never really being of that world. In this way the girl is condemned to reading herself only as the male reads her, seeing herself through her father's eyes. Pagano and Grumet show us another path, a gentler and truer path, the one of "thinking back through our mothers" (Pagano, 1990, p. 21). This process is one of seeing the mother in ourselves, understanding our desire to merge as in those early, narcissistic days, and turning instead to genuine connection with those around us – our brothers and sisters, our husbands, our children, our friends, and the children of others. Pagano advocates teaching as community and connection.

Women teachers, for whatever reasons, are likely to feel the pull of those demands in ways that their male colleagues do not. At the most obvious level, we need only note that women have a long history of responding to demands for love, for compassion, for nurturance, for *understanding* of the Other. Because we carry with us always our similarity to our mothers, we carry with us always, however inchoately, that first knowledge of connection. The Other is present. (Pagano, 1990, p. 116)

Pregnancy is like this. You are still yourself, yet you carry another inside your body. You are both Self and Other. You exist in a liminal space between; your body has a double meaning.

One of the core ideas in Pagano's work is that being a woman makes a difference. It makes a difference to how we were taught. It makes a difference to how we teach. It makes a difference to the boys and girls that we teach. It begins in infancy, in the fundamentally different relationship formed with our mothers. We know this intuitively, in the same way that we know that the experience of motherhood and fatherhood are different, even as they are deeply connected. Erasing these differences is so impossible, yet this is exactly what we have been attempting: pretending sameness to produce equality. Vivian Paley (1984) explores this sexism imbedded deeply in our curricula in Boys and Girls: Superheroes in the Doll Corner:

Kindergarten is a triumph of sexual self-stereotyping. No amount of adult subterfuge or propaganda deflects the five-year-old's passion for segregation by sex. They think they have invented the differences between boys and girls and, as with any new invention, must prove that it works. . . . When the children separate by sex, I, the teacher, am more

often on the girls' side. We move at the same pace and reach for the same activities. (p. ix)

We allow the polarization between Us and Them, but with the current vision of political correctness we have lost the language with which to talk about it. Seeing differences between boys and girls is often considered sexist. Aoki (1993) reminds us that when we are talking about difference between cultures we are talking about difference in kind, not in degree. This applies also to gender. These differences affect not just students, but teachers also. Women are not merely incomplete men. Little boys are not just "behind" the girls. This refusal to recognize gender differences in kind (whether born or made) oppresses everyone, not allowing the masculine and feminine positions to exist as choices, not creating spaces between for us all to live.

Everywhere there seemed to be a need for a language of "understanding" that could take up "difference" not as a problem to be solved but as an invitation to consider the boundaries and limits of one's own understanding. . . . Identity means nothing without a set of relations. . . the real work of our time may be defined by an ability to mediate meaning across boundaries and differences, whether those boundaries and differences be concerned with gender, race, or ideas. And somehow it seems to me that the hermeneutic imagination has an important contribution to make to that task. . . for the profound pedagogical purpose of affirming the way in which present arrangements always border on and open onto the space of an Other whose existence contains part of the story of our shared future. (Smith, 1991, p. 201)

The Feminization of Teaching

Returning to Bitter Milk, Grumet traces the history of the feminization of teaching. The purpose here is to investigate why we have a mainly female teaching profession, and yet a philosophy of teaching which denies the experiences and lives of those very women. She writes of those early women who chose the teaching profession, and we find that they taught not to validate their lives as women, but to escape them. It was the economics and history of the time that resulted in the feminization of teaching. Once in the classroom, however, the same women are influenced, Grumet asserts, by the psychosexual process she described earlier.

Whereas male children are required in the oedipal crisis to repudiate this primary identification with their mothers, female children often extend that sense of identification and intimacy well into adult life. Whereas males achieve a sense of autonomy from their mothers (albeit at the cost of their access to the fluid, emotional expressiveness that characterized the preoedipal bond), the females turn to their fathers to escape an identification with their mothers that is stifling and denies their own autonomy. (1988, p. 47)

It is as though the intentionality of teaching was lost, and the women who fled the oppression of the Victorian ideal of womanhood bought into the male version of reality. Instead of gently integrating their experiences as women into a conception of teaching, they betrayed their ways of knowing. From this basis, Grumet goes on to deepen her analysis and discussion of women's experience of teaching and what our alternatives might be to achieve a more truthful and valuable way of being in the classroom for children. "Stigmatized as 'women's work', teaching rests waiting for us to reclaim it and transform it into the work of

women" (p. 58). She continues by discussing the appropriateness of phenomenology and feminism in the work of curriculum theory, in the value of reading and hearing our own stories well in learning who we are as teachers.

The differences that mark us as male and female and shape our consciousnesses are patterns extended through our perceptions of the phenomenal world and inscribed in the philosophies, ideologies, and pedagogies that constitute our culture. The women who would teach to provide a path to a richer, fuller sense of human possibility and agency must read the shadows of their stories to recover their intentionality.

(Grumet, 1988, p. 74)

Teaching as Identity -- Teaching as Art

Part of the journey to this "fuller sense of human possibility" is claimed and reclaimed by recognizing teaching as an art. Indeed, as I negotiated my way through days, creating the spaces in which the children in my class learned, I felt that this is the most genuine way to describe teaching. To describe it thus opens its possibilities and creates freedom. It recognizes the intimate relationship between teacher and teaching, as between artist and art. "Curriculum is, after all, artifice, deliberately designed to direct attention, provoke response, and express value; it reorders experience so as to make it accessible to perception and reflection" (Grumet, 1988, p. 79).

Some teachers idealize a certain professional distance in their work (Schimoni, 1992, p. 118), a goal of separating their private lives from the life world of the classroom. Yet each day the teacher lives out the intricacies of her life in the way that she creates her teaching. She cannot escape herself in the act of teaching; by teaching she completes the act of becoming what she is.

This is the same relationship the artist has with his work. You teach who you are.

I want to argue that we need to fortify the aesthetic boundaries that define teaching. We need to re-create safe places, even in schools, where teachers can concentrate, can attend to their experience of children and of the world, and we need to create community spaces where the forms that express that experience are shared. The process of creating these spaces will be as important as the places themselves. (Grumet, 1988, p. 90)

There are those feminists who would reclaim our lives as women, recognizing our differences, beyond biology and reproduction. They would have us celebrate our femininity, value it, and see what it can contribute to the world. In doing this, we also allow men to be who they are. And we allow ourselves to connect honestly and genuinely across difference, not in spite of it, not from positions of dominance or power, subjection or weakness, but as equals who are different in kind, not in degree.

The "Look"

Grumet provocatively explores the "look" in pedagogy and in parenting. She shows how the way we look at children reveals perhaps more than we'd like about our relationship with children and our philosophy of teaching. She demonstrates how traditionally the look in pedagogy has been used to dominate, as well as to protect the teacher from the life world of the classroom, to make her "untouchable, invulnerable. The gradual and orderly surrender of one's body is the project of the elementary school" (p.111). It is here that Grumet draws the important distinction between parenting and teaching in the

sense that teaching lacks an essential aspect of relationship: time. It is time that allows the intimacy of true pedagogy to develop. In my first year of teaching, I was delighted by the slow yet inexorable progression of my relationship with the children. I grew to care deeply for each one of them, as I know they grew to care for me. It was wrenching to let them go in June. The next year, I was more protective of myself. I could not help putting the new relationship in the context of separation.

Parenting permits the ultimate reciprocity that pedagogy denies because it evolves in time. The history of the parent/child relation is one of exchanged glances. The child will walk many miles and make many visits to understand the look under which he has stood. . . . Denied duration, pedagogy precludes such reciprocity. . . . The look of pedagogy is the sideways glance that watches the student out of the corner of the eye. It is not easy to act like a teacher in the theater of contemporary schools. It requires seeing others and being seen, without being reduced to our images. (Grumet, 1988, p. 116)

The Language

"When I teach I seek a common language" (Pagano, 1990, p. 92). We have all experienced the special languages formed in classrooms. Each room has its own culture, its own language. The children mimic the teacher. The children mimic one another. These mimicries develop and evolve, and the teacher is changed by the children. "Every class is different," is a common truth you will hear in every staffroom in every school. We all know this. It is not merely a matter of forming the children into our image, those phantom children that we plan for in August. The language is negotiated with the particular

children we are confronted with, not just between teacher and each individual child, but within a community. Shared experiences and histories are created. In my early childhood classroom we kept a photograph album of the year's events. Sometimes I would find two or three children clustered around this album, fondly turning the pages, saying "Remember when. . ." Symbol systems are negotiated and created. One year we had a rather ancient gerbil, Licorice, who after five years of serving kindergartners died over the weekend curled up in his food dish. "Licorice" became a sign, a symbol for something significant to our class, something about old age and death and fond remembrances. And every now and then the children wanted to talk about him and what he was like and about the day they came in and his cage was empty. This became part of the common language of our classroom, for "a language is common when it can mean more than we can say because we have the knowledge of connectedness that the story asserts" (Pagano, 1990, p. 99).

Seeking a Middle Ground

Grumet is interpretive in her approach, searching for "the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end." In the final analysis, however, Grumet is a critical theorist, because she reveals ways in which her ideas can be lived out in the lives of our classrooms. She shows us where we are and the path we might choose.

We have been different too long. . . . And in that isolation not only have we relinquished the middle ground, that relational ambivalent place of our own histories, we have relinquished schooling as a middle ground as well. For it need not be the anteroom for second nature; it can be the place where the defensive oppositions of first and second nature are

mediated and transformed by women who think back through our mothers. (Grumet, 1988, p.192)

Grumet's feminism is meaningful in the sense that it names women's experiences, not ignoring them, not making them something mystical or untraceable. She makes them readable, part of the dance of humanity. For women who have become mothers, the contradictions and challenges of family and work, of nurturance and emancipation, of keeping something of yourself while you care for your children and the children of others mean that nothing is simple or linear, black or white. There is no simplicity in either of these roles. The thousands of tiny decisions and hundreds of large ones are not made in a pure vacuum or under the authority of a slick teaching manual or school policy. Teaching and mothering are both contextual.

The assumption. . . is that if we can say clearly what we mean, we shall be able to do cleanly what we intend. The mess of everyday life, the clang of bells, the intercom interrupting a lively classroom discussion, Robby tipping his chair over backwards, the child who comes to school unfed -- when we "say what we mean" we surrender these and their claim on us. (Pagano, 1990, p. 48)

My daughter wakes in her crib. She calls for me. She is hungry and wet, but mostly she is calling for me to come and be with her, to re-place her world. She has a claim on me that interrupts and informs this work. So must the children in our classrooms inform our teaching, in the mess and muddle of everyday life. Not the phantom children we planned for, but the particular Elise and Alex and Matthew and Brittany who claim our practice. They interrupt our smooth conceptions of curriculum; they break open the world anew (Jardine, 1994, p. 20).

The participants in this dialogue also have much to say about the nature of qualitative research. Pagano addresses the false dichotomy of objectivity versus subjectivity that is of such concern to interpretive theorists. In rejecting detached objectivity as being the univocal method of knowing Truth, there is the danger of falling into relativism, a belief in subjectivity where all opinions are equally valid, equally true, and none of us can really know anything for sure. But this is part of the same paradigm of black and white. As Pagano, Jardine, Aoki, and many others point out, there is a third alternative, outside the objective-subjective debate. It is one in which we dwell in the spaces between, where we can come to know one another and connect in meaningful ways, where we must listen to one another and the experiences of the other, even as we name our own. Some interpretations are better than others. But we must judge them carefully and contextually. Like life, interpretation is infinitely more difficult and complex. Pagano contends:

Open-mindedness requires of us more, however, than simply the assertion, "Everyone's entitled to his own opinion." That assertion is more likely to betray a close-minded consciousness than anything else -- after all it's just someone's opinion. That assertion is both an expression of relativism and the ground of domination. "Everyone's entitled to his own opinion," means that the speaker has stopped listening. He has his own opinion too. When we allow that everyone's own opinion is legitimate, we disown, moreover, the material importance of our own. To have an open mind is to confront, willingly and authentically, the other's story, to enter the story as a dialogue. Open-minded persons *claim* their own knowledge and tell their own stories, but they are always *mindful* of the fact that they *may* change their minds. Open-minded persons do not

merely tolerate other voices; they listen and respond. (Pagano, 1990, p. 85)

What is Pagano advocating for the woman who teaches in the "patriarchal wilderness"? What does she see as the alternative to the way we live now? Interpretive work requires that once we see our experiences through the phenomena more clearly, that we ask: how can we live better, more gracefully, with what we know? Again, Pagano's model is that of conversation. She sees teaching as conversation. "When we teach, we talk" (1990, p. 86). The patriarchal model for teaching is lecture, the one-way transmission of knowledge to the student, the empty vessel to be filled. A conversation is more appropriate for the work of women. We can anticipate the possibility of being changed by the experience, of keeping our minds open to the experience of the other, of creating a shared story in the contextual tapestry of the classroom. "We may say that practicing the art of teaching is practicing the art of conversation, the subtleties and intricacies of which women are well-attuned to" (Pagano, 1990, p. 131). Pagano invites Jane Roland Martin into this talk, as well as other feminists who recognize this difference in kind of the feminine way of interacting with the world.

A good conversation is neither a fight nor a contest. Circular in form, cooperative in manner, and constructive in intent, it is an interchange of ideas by those who see themselves not as adversaries but as human beings come together to talk and listen and learn from one another. (Roland Martin, 1985, p. 10)

Pagano's story is not my story, but it is like my story. We all are invited to see these connections between and amongst each other. And not only sister to sister, but also mother to daughter, and sister to brother -- the text that Pagano

would have us engage in asks us to uncover the subtexts of our lives, to see our lives as actually lived, to acknowledge and celebrate difference and draw strength from our knowledge.

In like fashion, Grumet's Bitter Milk is about opening the door of the classroom to show its nurturant work along with its productive work. It is not about changing the structure of schooling; so many theorists change the outside shells and appearances of education without really changing the experience for children or teachers. It is not about changing content or formats of curriculum, although content and format must be carefully considered. It is not questioning the existence of schooling as a construct in the first place, which some theorists, frustrated with the limits of our system, advocate as a way of throwing it all away and beginning fresh. This work is about changing our intentionality. Husserl's theory of intentionality shows that "We never think or interpret 'in general' as a rhetorical activity that bears no necessary connection to the world at large. Rather, thinking and interpreting are always and everywhere precisely about the world" (Smith, 1991, p.191). This conception of intentionality is relevant not only to interpretive philosophy but also to pedagogy. By becoming conscious of and reclaiming our intentionality, we can attempt to achieve "a consciousness that leaves the door ajar" (Hillman, 1987, p.154).

I am brought back to Jipson, and her suggestion that the role of the teacher-mother is impositional on our own lives and those of our students. But I realize that I am not wishing to combine these roles, to mother my students, to muddy the water and to give them what they may not want. That is an imposition, for although the teacher-mother is gentler than the patriarchal, authoritarian teacher, she also assumes a place in their lives that she has not been invited into nor perhaps does she want. But what I am talking about is the

recognition of how being a woman -- in all the fullness of what it means in this particular historical and cultural context, and then becoming a mother makes my teaching different from what it was before. It may not be the same for all women; it is not sweepingly generalizable. And it may not be True in absolute terms just because I have experienced it. But the resonances between women still reverberate on this topic, there is something going on here which we see reflected in one another, something recognizable. It is not mothering as a metaphor for teacher, but rather teaching through one's identity as a mother. And necessarily by virtue of being human, teaching back through our own mothers whether we are conscious of it or not. I think it has something to do with what Sara Ruddick (1989) calls "maternal thinking":

We were asking how we could become, during these hard times, "good enough" mothers. We were not reflecting for the sake of reflection; we needed answers -- by bedtime, by teacher conference time, by the time we had to accept or reject a job offer in a distant city. Though we desperately needed to act, it was abundantly clear that our nighttime conclusions simply yielded the next afternoon's questions. We started again, with each other and in long internal dialogue. (p. 11)

How does such a tangible difference in thinking change teaching? This maternal thinking I engage in, my child's little body and mind and spirit I care for, forces me to see other children differently. My daughters position me more precariously towards the children of others. Perhaps not because I am somehow "essentially" a woman in the sense that all other women and mothers are just like me. I certainly have no right to impose my mothering on the children of others. I would agree with the postmodernists when they contend that mothering cannot become a master narrative for teaching. But after we

deconstruct "woman" and "mother," we are still left with something recognizable that we can talk about to each other as we walk with our strollers or have recess in the staffroom. It is this "something" which is real and practical and important, it is this "something" which this thesis project hopes to make readable.

If there is a feminist revolution that strikes deeper than affirmative action curricula, and I think there is, it is a revolution of the body. It is the revolution of the peasant who knows that one cannot eat ideas and still have the strength to carry the world. It is a revolution in which doubleness is welcomed; it is a conversation rather than a debate, a question rather than an assertion. (Pagano, 1990, p. 41)

CHAPTER THREE

INTERPRETING THE DISCOURSE

The interpretive effort is directed squarely against [a] flattening, overly technical, surface reading of our lives as teacher educators and the lives of our students. . . . Interpretive work wishes to evoke and bespeak the figures that haunt us beneath the clean literal surfaces. . . . It wishes to evoke the places where collective meaning resides -- a haunted space where tales arc into tales and sense into sense, where the ambiguous passage of message ensues. (Jardine, 1994, p. 18)

Interpretive research seeks to ask meaningful questions and explore these questions genuinely and provocatively. This study chooses an interpretive methodology because it concerns the life world of female teachers -- their experiences of motherhood and the way in which those experiences make themselves felt in teaching. David Jardine writes and speaks eloquently about the importance of reading the messiness of everyday life, beneath the "clean literal surfaces." It is here where the truth of our experiences is felt, and here where meaning and significance are found. This study is interpretive in nature not merely because the life-world of women who teach cannot be condensed into slick checklists and statistics. It is interpretive in nature because hermeneutic inquiry has the potential to open up this topic, to lift it into our consciousness and our conversations, to give voice to the experiences of women that can then help others live more gracefully within the contradictions, challenges, and rewards of teaching and mothering.

The Question

This question of mothering and teaching has come out of my own experiences. A relatively new teacher, I became pregnant with my first child. I taught until I left on maternity leave, and since then have been caring for my daughter as well as continuing my graduate course work. Now mother to two, I have found these questions of what mothering will mean to my teaching to constantly bump at the edges of my consciousness. Mothering has already enlightened my view of curriculum. It has done this through an altered perception of the world's children: of who they are and of my responsibility towards them. Thus my understanding of curriculum, of education, and therefore of teaching has also undergone a quiet transformation. Becoming a mother changes one, in subtle and irrevocable ways. I am the same, yet not the same. Reading and exploring the topic, however, has not been enough, because I am left with unsettling questions about how other women have experienced this phenomenon. I am not only interested in my own autobiography, although admittedly this is where my question began. Have other women experienced a similar journey? I wanted to open up the topic to the lived experiences of others to help deepen my understanding of what has gone on in the lives of women. It is a topic that seems so rich, which resonates deeply with the women that I mention it to in all manner of contexts. I hope that by conducting this interpretive work I may have a greater insight and understanding, and that my writing will give voice to their lives as mothers, teachers, women -- that it will deepen our awareness of what it is that we do and of who we are. In turn, I believe that this project has the potential to also open up the topic for others -- women and men who may not be teachers, or teachers

who may not be mothers, and who have an interest in learning from the experiences of others.

The Research

The Participants

Two women have agreed to participate in this study. They are both teachers who have become mothers relatively recently. The first participant, whom we will call Nadine, returned to work when her baby was ten months old -- the school year before this study was conducted. At the time this study was conducted, her daughter was two years old. Soon after the research was completed, she also became mother to twin boys. Nadine was a teaching colleague of mine, with experience in kindergarten through grade 3. The second participant's return to work coincided with the research phase of this project. Her daughter was two years old. She began her reflections the week before school started. This participant, whom we will call Sandra, has taught in division two -- grades, 4, 5, and 6. The lives of these participants are busy and full, and their generosity in giving their time to reflect on their experiences is gratefully appreciated, particularly in the fall when teachers' lives are anything but settled. Their stories will be useful, because,

The point of phenomenological research is to "borrow" other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience. . . . *We gather other people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves. . . they allow us to become "in-formed," shaped or enriched by this experience*

so as to be able to render the full significance of its meaning. (Van Manen, 1990, p.62)

Additional Threads

Along with analysis of the reflections of the two women described above, this project has also made use of the many bits of conversation picked up along the way in a variety of contexts as I have been "living the question." It has also been intertwined with my own experiences and reflections on my journey into motherhood, for "all writing is in a sense autobiographical" (Smith, 1991, p. 202). Another major thread has been the relevant literature that comes not only from the field of curriculum studies but also psychology, nursing, philosophy, and feminist writings.

The Journals

The teacher participants and their reflections have been the major source of data for this effort. My interest is in interpreting "life as it is actually lived" -- and their experiences and their reflections on those experiences will give a rich base from which to read the text of mothering and teaching. They each were asked to engage in a two way journal with me during the fall to reflect on what becoming a mother has meant to their teaching. The first participant had the past year of teaching to bring to her reflections, as well as her pregnancy and her classroom that were concurrent to the research. The second participant had a different perspective to offer -- she was just returning to work as this research commenced. This represented an opportunity to capture her transition into her classroom for the first time since the birth of her daughter. Also a graduate student, she had insight into what I was trying to accomplish. We were able to

begin her journal before school actually started, and this opened a rare window into the transformative nature of this phenomenon. I began by writing each participant a letter, introducing some of the questions and issues. They responded with a journal entry, which I read and responded to in turn. Each response engendered new possibilities and questions. A log of these journals, responses, and their dates is provided in Appendix A. An example of one journal entry constitutes Appendix B.

The journal has been chosen over a strictly oral approach because of the additional time it afforded both the participants and the researcher to pause and reflect on the topic and our experiences. A question asked was not immediately answered, but could be lived with a little and written about when the thoughts had surfaced. Through this writing I hoped that a more evocative and thoughtful interpretation would become possible.

The Dialogues

Face to face conversations were also needed -- where we shared insights on the issues generated through the journal, where a more spontaneous reading of the topic was brought to voice, and where tone, verbal expression and body language aided in the communication of ideas. These were dialogues, not interviews, because:

When one is engaged in a good conversation, there is a certain quality of self-forgetfulness as one gives oneself over to the conversation itself, so that the truth that is realized in the conversation is never the possession of any one of the speakers or camps, but rather is something that all concerned realize they share in together. (Smith, 1991, p. 198)

With this in mind, the journal was supplemented with a dialogue session with each participant: semi-structured conversations that were taped and transcribed for interpretive analysis. It is hoped that in using both writing and speech to communicate, a rich base was provided from which to explore the difference mothering has made to teaching in these women's lives.

The Third Participant

As is likely self-evident, I became the third participant in this study. My questions and responses to the journal entries were not detached or objective. I allowed my own experiences to creep into the dialogue. I hope that by doing this, I am creating more genuine research, one that acknowledges the perspective and participation of the researcher. The interpretations generated occurred through interesting and lively conversation between the participants, myself, and the literature. My presence has not been artificially erased.

Hermeneutic Inquiry

The question being asked is a hermeneutic one, and therefore it is that sort of inquiry which provides the most appropriate way to proceed. As Gadamer (1979) argued, "the appropriate method for interpreting any phenomenon could only be disclosed by the phenomena itself through a kind of Socratic dialogical engagement between question and phenomenon" (Smith, 1991, p. 192). Hermeneutic inquiry has a long and distinguished history, and it allows us to ask the questions that are most significant to our lives as human beings because "its overall *interest* . . . is in the question of human meaning and of how we might make sense of our lives in such a way that life can go on" (Smith, 1991, p. 200). It is what the Greeks meant by "practical philosophy"

(Gadamer, 1983). David G. Smith (1991), in his chapter entitled "Hermeneutic Inquiry: The Hermeneutic Imagination and the Pedagogic Text," offers a compelling argument for the urgent need modernity feels for a more connected way of knowing than objective rationalism offers.

For Western cultures at least, there is a crisis of value at work that cannot be resolved simply by appealing to traditional forms of logic and authority. It may be precisely the inability of traditional (Western) forms of discourse to deal singlehandedly with the lived problems of modernity that makes interpretation or re-interpretation of contemporary paradigms and their institutional embodiments necessary. (p. 188)

History

Smith leads us through the long tradition of hermeneutics, beginning with Aristotle. Interpretation was one of the central issues of the Reformation, and hermeneutics meant that individuals could interpret the Bible without the Church's authoritative final word about the meaning of a text. During the eighteenth century Enlightenment "the question of method assumed full prominence" (1991, p.189). Many of the foundational texts written by the philosophers of the day still underpin mainstream Western thought, for example, Descartes' Discourse on Method, Mill's Logic, and Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations.

The point is that eighteenth century philosophers were full of optimism that life in general could be systematically brought under the control of correct logical procedure. It is *that* assumption, of truth being ultimately a methodological affair, that much of contemporary hermeneutics wishes to challenge. (Smith, 1991, p. 189)

In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1978, as interpreted by Smith, 1991, pp. 189-190) laid down three of the pivotal themes of hermeneutic inquiry. First is the intrinsically creative nature of interpretation, because "texts, works of art, and so on, are expressions of a creative spirit which any interpreter must somehow engage if interpretations are to be made that are faithful to an author's original intention" (Smith, 1991, p. 190). Second is the essential role language plays in human understanding, which foreshadows the deep and abiding interest hermeneutic thinkers have had and continue to have today in the exquisite expressiveness of language and the part it has to play in all human experience and our understanding of it, for

gaining a sense of how one's collective language works, what drives it, what are its predispositions in terms of metaphor, analogy, and structure, and so on, such understanding is quite essential for the work of the interpretive imagination, because in a deep sense our language contains the story of who we are as a people. It is reflective of our desires, our regrets and our dreams; in its silences it even tells us of what we would forget. (Smith, 1991, p. 199)

Finally, Schleiermacher gives us what has become known as the "hermeneutic circle," or the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation: "good interpretation involves a playing back and forth between the specific and the general, the micro and the macro" (Smith, 1991, p.199). This third aspect of hermeneutics is particularly important to this study. Although interpreting the experiences of two women obviously does not make the phenomenon generalizable to everyone, these experiences are worth exploring in depth because although they are not someone else's experiences they *could be*. It is a topic that touches each of us, because we were all taught and mothered by

someone, and many of us are mothers, and some of us teach. It is a topic which I see as being relevant to our journey as human beings in this life project of relating to one another, a topic which once explored, may help us to see one another more sensitively, more closely, more connectedly. Max Van Manen (1990) writes of the importance, in interpretive research, of recognizing

that one's own experiences are the possible experiences of others and also that the experiences of others are the possible experiences of oneself. Phenomenology always addresses any phenomenon as a *possible human experience*. It is this sense that phenomenological descriptions have a universal (intersubjective) character. (p.58)

Distinguishing Phenomenology

It is important at this juncture for me to pause and distinguish between phenomenology and hermeneutics; for to this point it may appear as though I have used the terms interchangeably. Both forms of writing and research are *interpretive in nature, and they share many of the same goals and a similar view of the world*. However, there are also some significant differences and they should not be understood to be synonymous. The most distinguishing feature of phenomenology is that in the final analysis it is interested in the identification of certain essences in human experience. Hermeneutics, in contrast, is more multivocal, and constantly plays the present against the past, the part against the whole; it plays with language and seeks to trace connections in both likely and unlikely directions, to "bring out this evocative given in all its tangled ambiguity, to follow its evocations and entrails of sense and significance that are wound up with it" (Jardine, 1992, p.55). So although many aspects of phenomenology and hermeneutics are shared, they are not the same. And

although this study is phenomenological in some respects -- it begins with a particular phenomenon in the lives of particular women -- it is intended to be hermeneutical in its substance and practice. It is not searching for the essence of what it means to be a teacher and a mother. Rather, it seeks to explore the "entrails," to read what is *familiar* in Jardine's sense of searching out the family resemblances (Jardine, 1992; Wittgenstein, 1968).

Husserl

To continue tracing the historical path of hermeneutics is to be lead next to Husserl. Smith writes that "any consideration of the development of hermeneutics must inevitably point to Edmund Husserl as the most significant shaper of all of the interpretive streams of human science which have flourished since the turn of the century" (1991, p191). It is this philosopher who has given us the conception of the 'life-world' (Lebenswelt) to characterize our life in the world as it is already there for us before we begin to understand or talk about it. As soon as we begin to articulate our experiences, or even begin to think about them, we are engaged in interpretation. Most notable, however, was Husserl's conceptualization of *intentionality*. This invoked his "massive project of overturning the Enlightenment ideal of objective reason" (Smith, 1991, p. 191). Intentionality is how we are always necessarily connected to the world at large in our interpretations of the specific. We are not capable of thinking abstractly about an aspect of the world separately and objectively from the world rhetorically or in general.

Interpretive inquiry does not wish literally and univocally to say what this instance *is*. Rather, it wishes to playfully explore what understandings and meanings this instance makes *possible*. It justifies this approach by

harkening back to the fact that it does not take up this instance as an 'object' with certain given characteristics. It takes it up, rather, as something which evokes and opens up an already-familiar way of belonging in the world, a possible way of being. (Jardine, 1992, p.56)

Heidegger, Gadamer, and Themes of Existence

Martin Heidegger, Husserl's student, radically questioned previously accepted notions of Being. He reconfigured Western thought around hermeneutics as the "foundational practice of Being itself. . . . Heidegger's casting of interpretation as the primordial mode of human existence. . . put Dilthey's project of a method for the human sciences into crisis because thereafter *method* could never attain a status independent of the project of thinking itself" (Smith, 1991, p.192). Two of the most important hermeneutic themes of existence that Heidegger introduced, further developed by his student Hans-Georg Gadamer, were the historico-temporal quality of human experience and the linguisticity of understanding. The first idea revisits the impossibility of completely objective thought because of the situated nature of our human existence, not only in the world, but in time:

According to Heidegger, human experience of the world takes place within a horizon of past, present and future. Understanding that which confronts us as new is made possible in the "now" by virtue of the forestructure of understanding which is already in us through past experience. . . . For Gadamer. . . we can only make sense of the world from within a particular "horizon" which provides the starting point for our thoughts and actions. . . . This understanding of our temporal nature Gadamer called "effective historical consciousness" (*wirkungs-*

geschichtliches bewusstsein), and its character is revealed most pristinely in the structure and function of language. Inevitably I speak within the language into which I was born, but my language already contains within itself in a sedimentary way the evidence of its own malleability and evolution. . . . My language contains within it. . . in a deep and subtle way, its anticipation of being transformed in the face of new lived realities. (Smith, 1991, p. 193)

This is the second theme, that of the profoundly linguistic nature of our interpretations of our lives. Our language helps to form us; it mediates our experiences and then is itself changed and evolves with our collective experiences to reflect who we are. One of the most insightful ways to study the past is through the language of the people. For example, the form of the language in Beowulf does as much to illuminate the eighth century as does the content of the poem itself.

"Doing" Hermeneutics

If Heidegger's interest lay in the question of being, as demonstrated by his major work entitled Being and Time (1962), then Gadamer's focus is reflected in the title of his landmark text Truth and Method (1979). And it is the question of method which we inevitably arrive at when asking "what is hermeneutics?" Often the issue is danced around and avoided, for in truth there is no straightforward formula to the question of "how does one *do* hermeneutics." Nevertheless, this is after all a chapter on the methodology of this study, and after one looks at where hermeneutics has come from and explored its philosophical underpinnings it still remains to attempt to address the *doing*. There is no formula, no cookbook step-by-step instructions to get you

from A to B, "because *what* is being investigated itself holds part of the answer concerning *how* it should be investigated" (Smith, 1991, p. 198). But there is an art, a practice, a way of going about interpreting instances and experiences that may be seen as constituting "good" hermeneutics. It is to this artful practice that we now turn.

The Hermeneutic Imagination

Smith elucidates four aspects to the hermeneutic "imagination" which are essential to sound interpretive work. They can be seen as marks of good interpretive work -- the practice that is to hermeneutics what method is to quantitative research:

1. "The first is to develop a deep attentiveness to language itself, to notice how one uses it and how others use it" (Smith, 1991, p. 199). As in the tradition of Schleiermacher, Husserl, Heidegger, and particularly Gadamer, one must become deeply immersed in language, to become aware of its nuances and undercurrents. Etymology becomes extremely useful, but so does simply becoming attuned to words and words within words, our expressions and the way we express ourselves. Metaphor, analogy, symbol -- all create and evoke a sense of our collective consciousness. Modern interpretive writers such as Jardine ask us to recognize and use language deeply and subtly. It is the artistic expressiveness inherent in the writing that often gives interpretive work, particularly phenomenology and hermeneutics, its distinctive style: its writers are deeply fascinated with the language that they work with, just as a gifted carpenter fundamentally loves the wood or the sculptor cherishes the stone he carves, seeing within it an animate, breathing thing. This is how language is to the hermeneutic imagination.

2. "A second requirement for hermeneutical explorations of the human life-world is a deepening of one's sense of the basic *interpretability* of life itself" (Smith, 1991, p. 199). This requirement seems self-evident and simple on the surface. Yet in practice it is with great difficulty that one can find the strength and the imagination to think for oneself instead of leaning back into the well-worn dogmas of our cultural and collective thought. There are many grand narratives (e.g. the tradition of consciousness and the critical or Marxist tradition (p. 195-6)) that weave their way through our consciousness and the hermeneutic imagination requires a continuous struggle to overcome and expose pre-determined modes of thought, modes which often involve a staunch determination to deny connection to one another and to the earth.

3. "Hermeneutics is not really concerned with hermeneutics per se: that is, with its character as another self-defining imploding discourse within a universe of other discourses. Far more important is its overall *interest* which is in the question of human meaning. . ." (Smith, 1991, p. 200). This is demanding and difficult, but rewards us with the potential to liberate us to live more reflective, conscious lives. Hermeneutics asks larger questions and sees us always in the middle of a storied existence -- personally and societally and in the overall scope of humankind. The hermeneutic imagination requires a deep rendering of significant topics; it is not content to scratch away at the surface.

4. "A fourth aspect of hermeneutical inquiry implicit in all of the others suggested so far has to do with its inherent creativity. Hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it" (Smith, 1991, p.201). And here resides a deep sense of responsibility in the hermeneutic effort to point to a better world. Unlike critical theory, which has a very specific agenda, interpretive research believes that a deep and sensitive understanding of our

collective stories can provide a sense of meaning and connection that will allow us to live more gracefully with one another, rather than trying to "fix" the world's injustices by exposing them and reshaping the social order in predetermined directions. "Its desire is to provoke new ways of seeing and thinking within a deep sense of tradition, bringing about new forms of engagement and dialogue about the world we face together" (Smith, 1991, p. 202).

What Is Given

The alternative to interpretive inquiry is to sever the issues at work in the phenomenon from each other and our lives. This is the goal of objective research, to isolate the variables, to control them, to observe only the physically manifested characteristics, to trust only the senses and not our intuition or our insight or our past.

The only significances we can glean from these rootless surface readings of the incidents of our lives are from quantities and enumerable surface repetitions. . . speaking and writing of the resonant *meaning* of such an event is foregone in favour of an inquiry into whether a significant *number* of "respondents" will cite the same experiences, use the same words and concepts. . . . Because we have actively intentionally restricted ourselves to that knowledge produced methodically, it becomes illegitimate to engage these instances in ways other than simply collecting them. . . .Significance thus becomes intimately linked with *frequency*. More pointedly put, *significance becomes mathematized*. (Jardine, 1992, p. 54)

Isolating each link in the chain to make muddy waters clear is unacceptable in light of the kind of question I am asking. Mothering and

teaching are two tasks which are deeply connected to the human experience; they are intrinsically muddled and eddied, replete with currents and undercurrents of societal, familial, and individual forces. They are as important as they are ancient; they are complex -- richly intertwined with our language and our deepest needs and desires and hopes for the future. They are tasks that are intimately involved in the work of raising and caring for children and as such are immediately generative and pedagogic, and this generativity they hold in common with interpretive work (Smith, 1991; Jardine, 1992). This study attempts to rescue teaching and mothering from the separate spheres where we have traditionally placed them -- teaching from the strictly masculine, productive, public world, and mothering from the feminine, reproductive world of the private. In reality they twine and intertwine around each other and inform one another. Even teachers who are not mothers have themselves been mothered, and their own mothers are part of their work in their classrooms. To sever these generative and reproductive tasks and to put them in neatly labeled boxes is to deny the deep truth of our experiences. Hermeneutic inquiry has the potential to uncover and trace the connections that are made daily in our lives.

Interpretive research begins with a different sense of *the given*. Rather than beginning with an ideal of clarity, distinctness and methodological controllability and then rendering the given into the image of this ideal, it begins in the place where we actually start in being granted or given this incident in the first place. It begins (and *remains*) with the evocative, living familiarity that this tale evokes. . . Interpretive research, too, suggests that these striking incidents *make a claim on us and open up* and reveal something to us about our lives together. In this sense, our

unanticipated, unmethodical being in the world can, quite literally *in* certain instances, make a claim to truth. (Jardine, 1992, p.55)

Thematic Moments

As this project evolved, as I read the journal entries of the participants and responded to them, I could see certain themes present themselves and intertwine with others. Bergum's conception of "thematic moments" is useful.

It was as if the themes, or thematic moments, came out of the stories themselves -- they "showed themselves," in a sense, as they were discovered after the stories were written. Moreover, in reflecting on each woman's uniqueness and what stood out of her individual story, it became apparent that these moments were found in the other women's stories as well. . . . These moments are not periods of time, although they occur over time, but are identifiable aspects of this experience that interact together to show the change from woman to mother. . . . Thus thematic moments are not magically appearing essences, but are useful focal points, or commonalities, of experience, around which phenomenological interpretation can occur. (Bergum, 1989, p.13)

As I began to identify certain issues in the writing, I began asking questions to the participants that were more focused. Looking back in retrospect and reflecting on their responses, it seems to be that there are four areas or thematic moments that come to the forefront when living through this phenomenon of teaching and mothering. These four issues constitute the topics for each of the following four chapters. They are interrelated and interdependent, at times under the surface, but they continued to reappear in turn. It is like a spider web. There are places of concentrated ideas, "knots in

the webs of our experiences, around which lived experiences are spun. . . " (Van Manen, 1984, p. 29), with wisps and strands, connecting and holding -- creating the whole. The following four chapters look at each of these issues in turn. Although somewhat arbitrary -- they each discuss simply a different facet of the phenomenon and depend upon one another -- it seemed that almost everything my participants expressed fit in under one of these headings. Throughout these chapters, I will be quoting extensively from the journals and the transcripts from our taped conversations as they give a rich and detailed description of what this phenomenon means in the lives of the participants. I will be referencing each quotation from the journals with the pseudonym of the participant, a response number to indicate where the entry fit into the journal sequence, as well as a page number. I also will be quoting from my letters written in response to the participants' journals. The taped dialogues will be referenced by participant and date, and in each citation, "M." refers to myself, and "N." and "S." to Nadine and Sandra respectively. (For a complete log of the research, please refer to Appendix A.) Each chapter attempts to interpret the writing and the conversations and integrate these with my discussion as well as voices from the field. Following this is the final chapter, which asks what can be done with what has been found -- where it leaves us, as teachers, as mothers, and as human beings.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNDERSTANDING MOTHERS AS A MOTHER

When the topic of this study comes up in conversation with teachers who have children, there is a nod and an eager smile. There is a confirmation: yes, I am a different teacher now than I was before. And most commonly, they remark on some variation on the theme that they now understand parents in a way that they could not before. In her journal, Sandra wrote: *Being a mother adds an astute viewing dimension to teaching, because one views children from the other side of the teacher-student-parent triangle. (Sandra, Response #4, p. 1).* One teacher explained, "I just understand now what it is that parents want for their children when they send them to school."

I feel my relationship with parents has changed. . . . I have a greater understanding of what I used to deem "demanding" questions coming from parents. In fact I now truly believe we all only want what's best for our kids. (Nadine, Response #2, p. 2)

Many teachers are empathetic towards parents, but becoming a mother puts the teacher in the parents' shoes, allowing a more tangible empathy based on experience. Teachers know a lot about children; they have experience with large numbers of children, but their knowledge is not the intimate, day-to-day knowledge of the parent. There is a significant *specificity* to the parent-child relationship. As Grumet points out, one of the most dividing differences between teaching and parenting is the *time* that the parent has to evolve and grow with the child (1988, p.116). You come to know your child in the most amazing detail and particularity -- what this look means, what that gesture

indicates, what they like to eat for lunch and how they sleep and when they are likely to become frightened. It is this day-to-dayness of the parent child relationship that evolves over countless days, which is difficult to imagine before one experiences it. My two-year-old, deep in the process of learning to speak, uses many half words and approximations that my husband and I understand immediately but might as well be another language to our friends. We know within a given context what she is likely to be saying, and we understand her approximations. We delight in each new word we discern as she tries it out. We find ourselves adapting to her language and sometimes say things as she says them even to each other. Although conscious of the fact that she will not learn to speak properly unless we speak properly, it is difficult not to pick up and imitate her approximations in our enjoyment of them. It is as if the family engenders its very own culture, with its own language and symbols, even as a classroom does. But the culture of the family is more specific, more enduring, more intense. The children of your classroom will leave after a year or two. The culture of the family lasts a lifetime. Perhaps becoming a parent gives the teacher a deeper insight into the culture within which the child first learns about the world. The knowledge of one's own family culture is not transferable in a blanket fashion. Yet one attains a greater appreciation for the uniqueness of each family culture. We were all children once. But our own childhood is imbued with a certain mysterious veil of familiarity through which it is difficult to clearly see the strands of our own development.

If our understanding of education rests on our understanding of the reproduction of society, then the reproduction of society rests on our understanding of reproduction, a project that shapes our lives,

dominating our sexual, familial, economic, political, and finally, educational experience.

I want to argue that *what is most fundamental to our lives as men and women sharing a moment on this planet is the process and experience of reproducing ourselves.* (Grumet, 1988, p.4)

Becoming a mother means that I know how mothers are now -- I know what it is to be a mother. Not just from the perspective of a teacher, but that I know mothers AS a mother. "Mothers know how mothers are -- how mothers need their children" (Bergum, 1989, p.111). And this gives a double exposure to my role in the classroom. I am still teacher to the children in my classroom. But I may now be a mother of a child in another teacher's classroom. This potentially gives a different dimension to my experience. Perhaps I am a more sensitive parent-to-the-teacher. Perhaps I am a more sensitive teacher-to-the-parent. Teaching is contextualized in a different way.

I have a new respect for parents and the trust they put in me to help their child through a very crucial school year. I'm not sure how I will fare as a Grade One parent. How intrusive will I be? How many of my "never will I . . ." statements will I choke on? (Nadine, Response #2, pp. 2-3)

It comes back to the comment related earlier about knowing more about what mothers want for their children, knowing it from the perspective of experiencing it ourselves. Sandra, who perceived herself as an academically driven teacher before, now feels she has more of an appreciation of the whole child. She cannot help imagining what kind of educative experience she will want when her child enters school. And she cannot but allow this knowledge to infuse her teaching. She wrote:

My teaching philosophy may have undergone some subtle changes too during my two year hiatus. Partially due to the reflection that I have been engaged in, I have come to realize more clearly why I teach the way I do. . . . I felt that if I could give my thirty grade four students the desire to and the skills necessary to function in a literate, mathematical world, then I would be fulfilling my primary objective as a teacher. . . .I pushed my students hard and they responded. I held high learning expectations for them and they were usually met. . . I think I have become less singularly focused. As a result of seeing Chelsea respond naturally to a variety of experiences, I now realize more fully the importance of a rounded education. I have seen Chelsea and all other very young children respond naturally and confidently to music, art, language, movement -- and I realize that maybe elementary aged children are too young to be "pushed" in certain areas at the possible expense of others. During my last years teaching I did not fully recognize the importance of the music and art programs in our school. I would keep children from music or art if they had not completed their math or writing assignments! What message was that sending to the students? That reading and writing were more important than drawing and singing? I think perhaps so. This I realize now was not right -- it does not feel right to me now. I guess I would want my daughter to be exposed to and encouraged in all dimensions and not subjected to the personal whims and biases of her teachers. (Sandra, Response #1, pp. 5-8)

There is a significant change in thinking revealed in this passage. It is a recurring theme in Sandra's writing and dialogue, this shift from an academic focus to a greater appreciation of the whole child. That the shift occurred in this

direction is not universal. In fact, Nadine found that mothering clarified her ideas about teaching in the opposite direction: she now is more focused on her role in being responsible for curriculum content, whereas before she felt very responsible for all aspects of her students' lives:

As a parent, I feel a responsibility to save time and energy for my child so she can have a rich experience base for life. I guess this goes back to my previous comment about how I used to think I had to be everything to students (the nurturer, the self-esteem builder, the teacher, the role model, etc.). I now see more clearly that this is primarily a parent's job, not a teacher's. (Nadine, Response #2, p. 2)

Although on the surface mothering seems to have had a nearly opposite effect on the two women's views on the role of the teacher, it is important to realize that they started in different places and may have actually been moving towards a middle ground. This is an aspect of the study that we will explore in more depth later. Regardless, in both women's experiences, a significant shift did occur. They talked about how they see parents differently, but also how they see children differently. They know children in a different way. This is evident in the above quoted passage from Sandra's journal -- in "seeing" her daughter respond "naturally" and "confidently" -- the home environment is one where we perhaps glean more insight about the child because it is their natural environment. The school is not a natural environment for children (Elkind, 1988; Polakov, 1992). We can only understand the life a child leads when presented with the culture in which he or she has rooted and grown -- the culture of the family. And existing within our own family and observing our child live within our walls allows us to greater appreciate the influence and

importance of the lives our students lead beyond the classroom. In one of my responses to Sandra's writing, I reflected:

I think before I perhaps thought I was providing more than I really was. Not to diminish the importance of what we do as teachers. Instead, I think what I mean is that before perhaps, in my mind, I underestimated the parents. I did not see the child clearly in their life-world, placing too much emphasis on my classroom. When my daughters go to school, I imagine now how I will see it as just a portion of their experiences. I think I now see children more clearly in the complex tapestry of their lives. (Letter #3 to Nadine, pp. 1-2)

Becoming a parent means that we now understand *bodily* what it means to be a parent. Becoming a mother is a profoundly physical process, which continues through the child's infancy.

Yet there is one moment I would remember, the day following the birth of my daughter, my first child, when my skin, suffused with the hormones that supported pregnancy, labor, and delivery, felt and smelled like hers, when I reached for a mirror and was startled by my own reflection, for it was hers that I had expected to see there. Over and over again we recapitulate and celebrate that moment, even as we struggle to transcend it.

The child is mine. This child is me. The woman who bears a child first experiences its existence through the transformations of time and space in her own body. The suspension of the menstrual cycle subordinates her body's time to another, contained and growing within her. . . The symbiosis continues past parturition, as the sucking infant drains her mother's swollen breast of milk, reasserting the dominance of

the child's time over the mother's as lactation and sleep as well respond to the duration and strength of the child's hunger and vigor. (Grumet, 1988, p.10)

For a time after your child is born, you are tied to the infant in a way that belies the severed umbilical cord. As time passes, the physical bonds loosen, but an emotional bond is formed to take its place. For a long time, the parents are the child's world. A loving parent constructs this world with care. Later it is necessary and healthy to broaden that world. As a childless teacher, we may remember the experience of family and the gradual pull of and into the world. We take the child's side in wanting to become more independent of the parents. We encourage the separation. As an early childhood educator I shooed nearly crying parents away from the door and closed it, smiling to myself, knowing that the children would be fine. Now, as a parent within myself as a teacher, I might allow those parents to linger a little, understanding their need to simply *be* with their child through milestones and miles, their need to know what is happening first hand. That the child will be fine I no longer see as the point. It is the needs and wishes of the parents that I now have a greater respect for because I understand the depth of emotion and connection from which they spring. The parent is in it for the long haul. For them, the first day of school is no laughing matter. As Dr. Jim Field (personal conversation, October 1995) once remarked, of himself as a teacher who became a parent, "I cry more." Sandra wrote:

I have never cried as much in my classroom as I have this week. On Monday morning I was on supervision when little Jessica, my grade five student, came to me and said, "My mother went to the bank yesterday and never came home -- and even if there was a really long line up, it still should not have taken her all night to come home." The tragic innocence

and perceptivity of this came to full realization on Wednesday when her grandmother was summoned from Edmonton to reestablish custody of Jessica and her seven year old brother. Her mother never came home. When little Jessica came to school on Wednesday with her Grandmother and told me that she was leaving for Edmonton, I was heartbroken. Jessica is an absolutely delightful girl who has suffered much at the hands of her drug-addicted mother. The thought of this little girl all alone for three nights and three days just broke my heart. I kept asking "How could a mother have done that?" I said good-bye to Jessica that afternoon in our classroom and my students stopped and listened silently as I fought back the tears. They don't understand just why 'the teacher is crying' but most of them know Jessica had been left alone. This didn't seem to phase them. I could not help feeling tremendous sadness for this little girl who does not deserve this horrendous treatment. I felt like bringing my class together and talking about Jessica's situation. I think I wanted them to go home and be thankful that their mother hasn't abandoned them. I decided not to -- out of respect for Jessica's privacy. But the sadness remains, and I think about Jessica often. How will this affect her, now, in a few years, as a mother herself. I just cannot understand how a mother could have done that. In my somber, teary state, I went to the office after school Wednesday, and asked another mother, "How could a mother have done that?" I just cannot understand this. I am still asking myself this. How mentally unstable or chemically imbalanced does a mother have to be to just not come home to her children? I have not been this emotionally affected by a student in my

life. And I think as a mother now, this week's event has saddened me much more intensely. (Sandra, Response #4, pp. 2-4)

There are different layers present in this story of Sandra's. Sandra's pain at the ordeal Jessica suffered seems to have taken on a different quality for her as a mother. There is no question that she would have been shocked and saddened by the event had it happened in her classroom before the birth of her daughter. There is no question that she would have done everything possible to help this child. But the added, significant dimension is reflected in her repeated, numb refrain: "How could a mother have done that?" The question cries out from a woman who herself cares for her child in a specific way. It is unfathomable, from this perspective, knowing how the well being of your child takes precedence above all else, to imagine being in a state where you would not come home to your waiting children. "How could a mother have done that?" is a question which springs deep from a place of knowing what it is to be a mother. And her passionate concern for the child springs from a place of knowing bodily how dependent young children are. It comes from being able to picture, all too vividly, the two children at home in the house all alone trying to cope, afraid. It comes from the images of them trying to continue on with their routines: Jessica perhaps putting pyjamas on her little brother and tucking him in bed, the two of them having cereal in the morning, surprised that their mother has still not returned ("even if there was a really long line. . ."), somehow managing to get themselves to school. In our interview Sandra and I discussed this event further, and she revealed that it was eventually a neighbour who telephoned the police, seeing the children trying to find their way around with flashlights -- the bills had not been paid, and the electricity had been cut off.

This story stops us in our tracks, saddening us, making us wonder what has happened to our world that something such as this could occur. And as Sandra wrote, as parents, it affects us all the more intensely. It is not because we care more, that would be to imply that those without children care less. It is simply that the bodily, day-to-day living with a child engenders a very specific kind of knowledge and extends the need to care for the child. There is a part of ourselves and our psyches that is awakened with the birth of a child -- a part of ourselves that never really sleeps again, that completes the circle of our journey of being cared for into the caring of. Bearing children places us in a different position in relation to the world.

M: We were talking about your sense of responsibility towards children. But for you -- what you seem to talk about a lot is this emotional intensity that you have now.

S: Yes. I'll be watching the news -- the parade in Brussels this week. I just thought. . . .how. . . how could those parents be dealing with that. . . . Again, I tried to imagine what they are going through. . . I think I just -- I feel intensely emotional, sad, sad, sad, for those parents. . . I think as a society, in order for the species to survive adults have to look after the young, and giving birth to young is what starts this process, or heightens the process.

M: . . . or brings you into that -- completes your transformation into that role.

S: I'm sure there's sociologists who've looked into how parenthood affects one's emotions.

M: . . . and maybe as you said, I think if you were to look at our roots as being tribal. . . as a mother . . . you also take on the children of the tribe.

S: And it's the mothers who take on the children of the tribe, it's not the young girls. (October 25, 1996)

This passage, taken from my conversation with Sandra, again taps into this issue of the emotional intensity that childbearing brings to our relationship with children. It seems as though our feelings are brought closer to the surface of our thinking and our bodies; we are somehow more aware of our emotions especially in relationship to children. It is interesting to ponder the physiological aspects of this. Any nursing mother will tell you the affect that her baby's cry will have on her body. The sound of the baby's cry often causes the milk to let down, even before the woman brings the baby to suck. While nursing my second baby, I had the experience of feeling my milk let down dramatically when my *toddler* would cry. Our responses to our children are not entirely under our control, not always a result of a thoughtful decision. It is a bodily reaction to our child in need. And these responses, once awakened, influence our relationship with other children, because we understand what it is to be a mother.

My conversations with Sandra often centered on this issue of emotional intensity. But I have come to wonder if this also goes beyond the feeling aspect of understanding mothers and children AS a mother. It is not just about what you feel, it is about what you do. In becoming completely responsible for your child, you understand responsibility differently. Vangie Bergum in her study (1989) heard this transformation in the voices of her participants:

"When I see a child on television, it is like seeing my child. I see all children as my child," said Anna. She talked of the earthquake in Mexico where babies were found in the rubble days later. It is the knowing -- "what babies are like now," and imagining them crying and crying, all

alone -- that moved her. She does not think she would have responded with such emotion before Jenna's birth -- and she thinks it has added a dimension to her life that she sees as good.

Yet Anna wants a happy balance between emotion and reason. Although she is happy for her new "softness," as she calls it, being touched by small animals, being more cuddly, with more need for closeness, she wants to be part of the larger reasoning world as well. Katherine, too, said, "I had to make myself watch the news so that I would know what is going on in the world". . . .The "child on my mind," then is a way of being, and not merely an emotional reaction to children. It is a way of being and thinking about and experiencing the world -- the world as a good place for children. Anna, earlier in pregnancy, wondered if this is true -- if the world *is* a good place for children. (p. 110-111)

This phrase of Bergum's -- "child on my mind" -- captures part of the essence of what becoming a mother means to a woman. When women speak of the loss of freedom that becoming a mother means, it is perhaps not so much literal freedom as it is mental freedom. You never really have yourself to yourself, because that child is always there, present, on your mind at some level. You not only feel differently -- the emotive aspect discussed earlier, you not only act differently, in your new total responsibility for another, but you think differently as well. And these facets to your life are united in a different way.

Passions of maternity are so sudden, intense, and confusing . . . we often remain ignorant of the perspective, the thought, that is developed from mothering . . . Intellectual activities are distinguishable but not separable from disciplines of feeling. There is a unity of reflection, judgment, and

emotion. This unity I call "maternal thinking". (Ruddick, 1983, pp. 213-214)

Once we begin to think this way, in our homes, in our hearts, the question remains of how this finds its way into our teaching. It must; we teach who we are. And if mothering changes the way we think within our families, it is impossible to imagine that this new way of thinking would not spill over when we arrive at work. The attempt to sever our private lives from our public lives is just what writers like Grumet are advocating we turn away from -- as if this severing were truly possible in the first place. I hope that through this project mothers who are teachers will feel more supported in using their mother knowledge in their classrooms, to recognize it and give it voice. Sandra, working as she does in a very high needs environment, finds that her mothering experiences intensify her relationship with her students and put her role in their lives into sharp relief.

S: I think I feel more intense emotions towards the type of parents that -- blow my mind away, because they are so unlike me I feel incredible hostility towards them for what they've done to these children. More so than I would have felt before, because I have put such huge effort into my child . . . but then as a teacher, I'm coming in, and I'm scooping up these children, and I think that I'm responding to these children better . . . I feel like I want to rescue them in a sense. . . (October 25, 1996)

What is evident from this passage, and clearly apparent in many of my conversations with Sandra and in her journal is her difficulty in accepting the neglect and abuse on the part of certain parents that she comes into contact with. She found that as a parent herself she now found that kind of behaviour unfathomable, and felt a large degree of what she expressed as rage and

hostility towards parents that were not adequately caring for their children, or worse, abusing them. This is something that she sees as a change in herself. As I read my participants' journals, I began to notice a tension between two perspectives developing. On the one hand, there is this aspect to the phenomenon where we are more understanding and empathetic of mothers. We understand that mothering is hard. We have first hand knowledge of what parents want for their children. At the same time, however, we often seem to hold other parents more accountable for their actions. We hold them more accountable for the environment they provide for their child. We see them as being responsible, as we now see ourselves as being responsible. Nadine wrote:

I'm not sure I understand children differently or look at children differently as much as I look at their parents and environments differently. In fact I guess I have even greater compassion for children and the choices they make based on their upbringing. For instance, I could say that I have even less tolerance for disrespectful children but is that really a total reflection of the child? (Nadine, Response #3, p.1)

In what Nadine has written there again is a sense of a fundamental shift taking place in how she sees children and parents and the relationship between them. In many places Nadine expresses what she sees as having less "tolerance" and "patience" but greater "compassion". She now has a greater respect for how immensely significant the home environment is. She holds the parents more accountable for this environment. She is more understanding of the children and their actions given the context of their lives. Sandra, working in such a high needs environment as she does, finds the tension of these two aspects of her relationship with parents to be even more difficult. She feels that

she cannot have high expectations of parents – that she cannot have any expectations of parents – in an environment where parents are finding it a challenge to even look after themselves. But her new sense of insight into the role that the home plays in a child's development leads her to see the nurturing aspect of their lives as being so significant.

If I had encountered Tyler before becoming a mother, I would have not felt the same rage toward his mother. Consequently, I may have placed more responsibility for Tyler's disturbances on Tyler. I likely would have been more critical of Tyler and not of his mother. Regarding the nature-nurture debate, I think becoming a mother has pulled me toward understanding the strength of the nurturing side. I see Tyler as having suffered at the hands of his nurturing. Before becoming a mother, I may have resorted to a 'label', and figured that Tyler was a disturbance because of his nature. (Sandra, Response #3, p. 4-5)

There are two important facets to this paragraph. One is the shift in Sandra's emotive responses in her work. Like Nadine, she is in a place of feeling greater compassion for the child within the context of his life-world. She is also in a place of feeling greater hostility towards a cocaine addicted parent. She sees that parent as being responsible for her actions and her child. She sees that Tyler is having difficulties, and hears that the mothers' addiction has affected him not only emotionally, not only physically in her ability to care for him, but also in all likelihood prenatally. The mother is currently 'clean' and is attempting to rebuild her life with her son. Sandra's relationship with her has been a positive one. But her struggle is apparent:

What is difficult though is in a case like Tyler's – when a mother has, in my opinion, done some wrong things. How can I not pass judgment on

her? How can I not be critical of her? I recognize the need to help her maybe more so now that I understand the difficulties of motherhood, yet I will never accept or condone her behaviour. I can talk to her very pleasantly now because I think she has changed. Now I don't know what will happen to my relationship with her if I learn that she has returned to her addiction. (Sandra, Response #3, p.7)

This response of Sandra's is candid and self aware. If we teach who we are, then we teach with the struggle of recognizing our own processes, our own struggles with judging others and feeling prejudice (remembering prejudice means pre-judgment). Becoming a mother adds another layer of experience and perspective to who we are. So it gives us another dimension to ourselves that works itself out when we teach.

I referred to two important facets to Sandra's response in pages 4-5 (Response #3). The second is one that also recurred frequently in my discussions with participants and has already been alluded to. Becoming a mother gives one a whole new perspective on the nature-nurture debate. And it is another paradox, because mothering helps you to appreciate both sides more. Both my participants are more aware of the nurturing role of the family, and tend to blame the child less for difficulties he or she is having. But at the same time, parenting gives a new perspective on how children come to us with their own identities. The image of parent or teacher is that of the gardener, not the clay maker. Our job is not to mould, but to provide a healthy environment for growth. The potential for the beautiful flower or the nourishing fruit is already present in the seed. Children are not born as a completely "blank slate", as Locke thought (1690, as cited in Gutek, 1988, p. 168). Their experiences and environments are certainly paramount. But they arrive with identities and

strengths all their own. It is our job to begin respecting them as individuals from the very beginning. In my response to Sandra's journal entry quoted above, I wrote:

I too feel I have more respect for the importance of a child's environment. Interestingly, I find I also understand the nature side more than I did before – I didn't really believe that children were just "born" a certain way. Yet now I see that there are many aspects of my daughter's personality that I did not create through her environment, aspects which seemed to be there from birth. For example, one of her traits is a high level of determination. As an infant, only a few weeks old, she decided she wanted to roll over onto her stomach from her back. She would get part way, but she wasn't yet strong enough to get right over. She would push with her feet and try and try until she made herself cry in frustration. I would always hover until I felt it was the right moment to pick her up. . . . That trait has persisted -- she is so determined about what she wants, rarely does she give up or want you to do it for her. At the same time, I think our response to this trait will have a significant nurturing effect for how she develops. I insist on seeing her determination as a positive thing, even when it is hard to cope with What a wonderful strength for her to have in life -- to not give up, to be independent and determined. . . . So it is the paradox of seeing how children are born with certain strengths, their own personalities (nature), and providing the environment where they can thrive (nurture). They are already their own person, worthy of being respected as the individual that they are. I cannot just simply create my child into my own likeness. (Letter #4 to Sandra, p.2-3)

So becoming a mother helps us to understand other mothers from the position of *being there*. It helps us to understand children on a different level, through the intense knowledge of our own child. It gives us new perspectives on the theoretical debates of the educative world; we now not only have the experience of our own childhoods to refer to when trying to sort out our thinking but also the immediate and pressing experiences of our own children. Not surprisingly, my second daughter is completely different from my first, and was so right from the beginning. As mothers, we know now, first hand, the bodily experience of bearing and caring for an infant and young child. That bond is not just something we see with our eyes but know with our hearts. In the balance, at the same time as we are becoming more empathetic towards parents, we are also raising our expectations and our assessment of responsibility. In Nadine's and particularly Sandra's case, we can observe the struggle that the parent within the teacher now has with trying not to judge another parent when something is seen that is not just difference but neglect or abuse. The sense of compassion for the child achieves a new depth, because becoming a mother taps a well of emotion reserved for that moment. Mothering is difficult work. A teacher who becomes a mother knows that now, bodily, and thus has the opportunity to stretch her conception of teaching in new ways. But what happens to her ability to focus on the children of her classroom? I have discussed the experience of having the "child on one's mind." What happens when a new mother goes back to the classroom, and returns to her responsibilities, while coping with all the new responsibilities at home? What happens to her time? It is to this issue I now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE

BOUNDARIES OF TIME AND SELF

Both of the women who participated in this study are mothers to very young children. Although the journey of a teacher as she travels *through* the parenting years is certainly important and of interest, this study has chosen to focus on that critical period when the woman first becomes the mother and then returns to teaching. Those first months back in the classroom are when the changes are freshest and closest to the surface. It is also a time when the teacher must now cope with the sudden and pressing demands of parenthood. Much of my written conversations with my participants centered on this issue of time and emotional and physical energy. Both of them were and are dedicated teachers who believe in giving the most that they can to their students. The dramatic change in their home lives has certainly had an impact on the form that this giving takes.

In the domain of what is officially spun to the public, "a teacher is a teacher is a teacher." We walk a delicate line because we do not want to attach more value to the time or efforts of one colleague over another. This is a protective aspect of the public education system. This study seeks not to compare the value of one teacher with another. It is not asking who or what is better. It is only seeking to explore the ramifications of mothering in a teacher's life, and through this, to ask some pertinent and pressing questions about who teachers are, about our role and our relationship to children.

Sandra and I began our writing in August, before the school year began. She had just moved in order to be closer to her parents, who would be caring

for her child when she started work in September. Sandra had utilized the full two years to remain at home that the school board allowed. We laughed about how she had timed the birth of her daughter with the school year -- Chelsea's birthday is in July. I shared how I stayed at work almost to my due date so that I could complete the term and its round of report cards and parent-teacher conferences. We had both woven our motherhood into the fabric of the school year. As Sandra moved closer to her first day back in the classroom, it was clear she had her child and the children of her classroom on her mind. Now it would be her work that would have to wrap itself around the needs of her child. She worried about her ability to be the dedicated and effective teacher she had been. She confided: *"I can remember wishing once that there should be a school for young childless teachers! (Isn't that awful?)" (Response #2, p.4).* Sandra began to write to me then, in the days just prior to her return to the classroom. It was fascinating to capture this transformative period, before and through this new beginning. What she thought before and during these first days is not what she came to think later in the autumn. This is what she had to say about herself in August:

Teaching - What May be Different . . .

I think that, perhaps, four areas will reveal the most differences. They are:

My priorities

What I have to give

My attitude

My philosophy

By my priorities, I mean that I no longer place my job in the forefront. As a young single, and then married, teacher, I lived for my job, and it consumed incredible amounts of my time. I thrived in this existence, and my teaching no doubt reflected the intense commitment I had. It is not surprising that the Board prefers to hire young childless teachers out of university (I think they do) -- because their age and stage of life allow them to put greater effort into their role. . . . I had a tendency to fill my time with school planning and preparation. This extra hour or two each evening, I think, showed in my students' learning. Each activity was thought through in detail, special materials were pre-made, and there was always time spent on extension or enrichment activities. Parents recognized this in my classroom and, probably, resulted in the frequent requests for placements in my class. Now I fear that when I am not willing to -- and I don't want to -- put that extra hour or two each evening then my program will be 'nothing special.' I know that I can still do a good job, but I perhaps will not stand out anymore.

I also fear that I may have less to give to my students. Part of my past success with children and their parents resulted from the genuine concern I held for them. I sincerely cared about each and every one of them. From this foundation, I was able to do great things with children who had -- in some cases -- disadvantaged beginnings at home. I think I was developing relationships with my students because I lacked any adult-child relationship in my life. I referred to my students as "my kids." I never questioned this at the time, but now, looking back, I think that this was so important to the success my students experienced with me. They

felt as though they were cared for and they responded positively and eagerly to this. I worry now that because I give so much of myself to Chelsea that I may not feel the same need to give of myself to my students. I worry that the quality of relationships between me and my students will not be as intense because I no longer feel the need to bond strongly with thirty other children. My child satisfies my need for 'love-from-a-child,' and I may not feel the same need to have my students care for me.

. . . . So much of my teaching -- maybe most of my teaching -- is based upon the connections I make with the children and their parents. Without a family of my own, I could put the emotional and cognitive energy into this. I planned at home every night and dreamed about my students. It is no wonder that parents recognized this caring. I don't think I can do that anymore because I have a child at home that deserves my undivided attention when I return home. I plan not to spend my evenings doing school work. I think Chelsea has to be my focus now. But will the relationships with my students be any less compassionate? Perhaps. We will see.

. . . .Will I still enjoy teaching to the same degree that allowed me to deal with the challenges in an optimistic, positive manner? I fear that I may be 'short' with the children, or that I may not rise to the challenges of this new school. . . . One cannot give emotionally to children when one is emotionally overwhelmed herself. (Sandra, Response #1, pp. 1-5)

I wrote back:

Your journal was so interesting because it both confirmed many of the things I had been thinking myself in terms of teaching after becoming a mother, but also in that you had insights and reflections that were new ideas for me. I suppose what struck me most forcibly was your level of concern for your teaching. Perhaps because I have been reflecting on the process from the comfort of an armchair -- i.e., without being faced with the reality of actually returning to teaching -- I have been focusing on how becoming a mother might enrich my teaching. Much of what you wrote last week was about how being a mother might limit your teaching. Certainly what was evident in your writing was your level of dedication to your work and your students before the birth of your daughter. You seem to be saying that now that dedication is focused on your child and you will have less to give to your students. You wrote that perhaps you would not "stand out anymore." I wonder about this -- I wonder if your skill and care in your teaching was defined by the amount of time you spent, or simply reflected by it, and if that same genuine care and gift of teaching will still be just as evident in your classroom, if you just will find other ways of organizing your time. Am I making sense? On the other hand, you were also clearly talking about the emotional energy you will now have available to invest in your students. In a way, your concerns mirror my own as I contemplate bringing a second child into my family -- how could I possibly love another child as I do my first? It seems I will not have enough left over -- that they both will miss out by having to share me. Yet my mother assures me that indeed I will have enough room in my heart for both. I wonder if being a teacher and a mother will be like

that -- maybe you have to grow a bigger heart! (Letter #2 to Sandra, pp. 1-2)

As reflected by my response, I was a little taken aback by the level of Sandra's concern for her teaching. Days before she started her new teaching position, she was overwhelmed with the prospect of a whole new structure to her day and her family time. As well, she was putting it into the perspective of what she had made of the experience of teaching before, and knew that she could not approach it in the same way. When she looked back, it seemed as though what made her "stand out" was the extra hours she put in planning and preparing. She put in this time because of her level of caring. I read between the lines and wondered if it was this caring that made her a good teacher, rather than the specially pre-made materials. As can be seen by her next response, she initially bristled at this suggestion, perhaps because as she said, she had "lived for her job." The way that she had approached teaching and the time she devoted to "her kids" was meshed with her identity. Exploring this level of intensity and the line drawn between teaching and mothering, between my children and the children of others is something we will do in Chapter 7.

What was more significant was her fear that she would not have as much emotional energy, that she would not be capable of caring as much because she cared so deeply and was so involved in loving her child. This I found to be an area of great interest and one I resolved to continue to explore as the term progressed. In response to the questioning I did about the caring vs. time in her teaching, Sandra wrote:

I admit the most dominant 'theme' of my first response was on how my mothering responsibilities were likely to limit my teaching. I guess I am

first focusing on the practical side of teaching and mothering. But let me explore the notion of caring and the time it requires to do so.

I have taught, and I now teach, in a 'high needs' school. . . . So in my five year history in 'high needs' schools I have seen a number of teachers who deeply care about children. My concern about not spending as much time in thought and planning for my class is based upon my belief that these children need so much from their teachers. The truly remarkable teachers I have worked with were – most often – childless teachers. I realize that this may appear as a gross generalization Here is my concern. I know I will not as effectively be able to individualize the programs . . . because this is what falls outside the realms of the average workday That work was what occupied my child-free evenings! I know I am spending too much time on this non-philosophical aspect, and if that is not what your thesis intends to explore, I'm sorry. But before I can delve into how motherhood has enriched my teaching, I must 'vent' my overbearing concerns. . . .

Time for me is a big issue. My students this year are very 'needy' and they respond to every little thing I do for them. I stop, however, at 4:50 and leave to go home because that is the choice that feels right for me. I try not to think about the other things that I could be doing for my students.

"To care" for one's students does not have to be measured by the time spent before, during and after the teaching process. The 'caring' is the

fundamental element that drives teachers to put forth the effort that they are able to make. I care not less now. . . I will do what I can, with what I have, where I am. (Sandra, Response #2, pp. 1-4)

This last paragraph was the beginning of what I saw to be Sandra's philosophical shift. This journal entry was made at the very beginning of September, only days into her new teaching assignment. Still overwhelmed, still worried about her ability to do her job at the level of dedication she had demonstrated in the past, Sandra was beginning to see how she could reconcile her two worlds. What characterized both participants was this sense that there were now some boundaries. They were less willing to allow their work as teachers to overwhelm their lives -- *"I stop, however, and leave to go home at 4:50 because that is the choice that feels right for me."* Another teacher I worked with hurried out soon after her students left to go and pick her young son up from the nanny. But she left with a heavy box and a folder each day containing the work she needed to accomplish that night. She told me: *"When the baby goes to bed, the box comes out."* Sandra's child is a night owl, and she knew that she had five or six hours of time with her once she got home. Her choice was to finish her school work at school as much as possible, so that her home time was home time. Nadine, too, did not want to burden her evenings meant for her family with additional work. Her solution was to get to school earlier in the morning. She wrote:

I went back to work when Danielle was ten months old. It was a difficult step. . . Going back to teaching was not easy for many reasons. The first reason was being without Danielle for so many hours of the day. A second thought that continually crossed my mind was I wondered how I

could maintain high standards for myself in the workplace with reduced hours. I was so used to working 10-12 hour days when we had no children and I made a promise to myself and my family to reduce my working hours to 8-9 hours daily. How was I going to do this? It is a continual struggle. . . . My focus as to what is really important in life is beginning to change. (Nadine, Response #1, p.1)

It seems that in observing teachers who have been teaching a long time, parents or not, that they also with time come to a similar conclusion: that one can teach effectively and with caring from day to day while working a sane number of hours and having a life outside the school. Indeed, many teachers feel that this is *key* to teaching well. Perhaps it is a more gradual process, this learning, going from a young, passionate teacher who puts in incredible hours, to being a more seasoned teacher who has learned what is most important, who has the years of experience to rely on, who can relax into her role, enrich her own learning, and seek time for recreation. Each teacher is different. But this process and growth that happens gradually and naturally must come almost overnight to a young teacher who becomes a mother, because her time becomes immediately and dramatically constrained. A month into the term, Sandra was beginning to reconcile the demands of both worlds. She was becoming more comfortable with her choices; but meanwhile, the caring she had for her students continued to shine through her work and her writing:

The practical constraints of my life now force me to clearly divide my time. This forces me to prioritize and work with efficacy to achieve what I think are the most important accomplishments every lesson, every day, every week. I think I have defined more clearly my role as teacher in that I know that for these needy children I will do what I can with what I have in

the time I have to do it. I will not transform their lives but, in some cases, I can provide an alternative adult influence, one which may make lasting impressions. (Sandra, Response #3, pp. 7-8)

Perhaps this necessity of focusing on the things that are most important is a positive change. It is possible to spend many hours in preparation for teaching without using those hours to impact the children's learning in significant ways. Both participants spoke of the need to do what would make the most difference, but on their own terms in the sense that they had decided what their work hours would be and they stuck to them. Each still spent about nine hours in the school each day in addition to occasional work they took home. They both tried to not work at home, except during report card time or to do things that were urgent and necessary. Nadine and I addressed this in our conversation:

M: . . . One of the major issues is this thing about time and the shifting of the focus, and the time and energy that we now devote to our children, that we don't have. . . for the classroom. . . . Because you've been teaching for a year since you went back. . . how do feel you came to terms with that?

N: Well I think number one, the biggest thing is, I had to put a limit on how long my day was, and I would go to work early in the morning, because I knew that's when I was freshest, and I could get work done at the school without interruptions, and I knew also that I had to pick up Danielle by 5 so the latest I could work was 4:30 so that was my first -- my first schedule change -- was that anything that had to be done, had to be done at [the school], between 7:30 and 4:30, whether that meant working over my lunch, that was fine --

M: Did you take work home?

N: No. . . that was my other -- that was my second thing. Aside from. . . urgent . . . things that had to be done. . . those kinds of things I would bring home. . . but other than that, no. I just wanted this to be my family time.

M: . . . did it change your teaching preparation style then? Did you find you had to prioritize differently, organize differently?

N: Last year was very unique because I also had that special needs [child] . . . in my room. It was an incredibly stressful year. I feel that the amount of time that my so-called "regular kids" got from me was not fair, because a lot of it was spent on organizing life for this other little girl, around the other six or seven people that were involved with her, and the meetings I had regarding her -- they seemed to be constant. I was so burnt out from that, until I got help by Christmas. . . I was really riding on what had been planned in previous years. . . I really felt the other kids didn't get the best of me especially at the beginning of last year. . . .

N: Yes, the first two weeks at school were really tough, because I spent a lot of time thinking about Danielle, at inopportune times -- what I thought was inopportune times, because it would distract me. But as soon as I got into the flow of things, and you got -- so busy that that's exactly what happened. My mind set: I'm here to do my job, this is my time for these kids, these parents, these meetings. I became very forthright about when I was available for meetings, especially because this little girl last year required so much extra meeting time with specialists and so on, I was very specific about my meeting times which I've never been before. I was very stringent about my hours, and said,

look, this is what I'm willing to give, and really took control of – and instead of being the person that I would adjust to what other people wanted, I really put my foot down and said no, I'm sorry, my family is important too and I'm going home to my family. I struggled with that with my team partners as well, because they were both night people. . . they'd just be getting into things when I had to leave. But I couldn't feel guilty about that. . . I was amazed at how I could do that. . . .

It was school time or it was family time. I really felt I didn't have a lot of time for me personally, or even for my marriage, as much as I used to. . . I continue to struggle with that. . . how can we go on a date, when I'm not with Danielle during the day. . . It was hard for me to consider life for myself, because I was away from her all day, and it's not fair to her.

M: . . . *You felt guilty about your team partners, you felt guilty about what you were giving to the kids, and about the parents, and then about your child, and then . . . is that something over the year that abated a bit or do you still struggle with that?*

N: *Oh, of course, it's the lowering of the standards that's a big struggle, and I think that's exactly where the guilt stems from. . . and to accept that you're still doing alright. . . you're still doing the best that you can, it's just that your priorities have changed. . . in my mind I still had to maintain a supermom, super career woman image. . . I guess, when I look back on it, I probably grew a lot more last year than I gave myself credit for, even just sitting here talking to you about it. (October 24, 1996)*

This passage quoted from the transcript of our conversation is a long one, because I wanted to give the flavour of these discussions around work and family and the struggle and tension between the time available for each. It

seems as though there is never quite enough time for everyone and always something more to be done. This was a common refrain too, this idea that now there was just very little time just for oneself. Sandra asked "has there ever been any personal time in the last two years?" (Since the birth of her daughter.) In our conversation what became abundantly clear was Nadine's new sense of boundaries in terms of her availability for her co-workers. This story of the legally blind child in her class her first year back is an important one. It is a reminder that life goes on in spite of ourselves and our personal needs. Nadine perhaps needed a school year with familiar tasks, time to reacquaint herself with her role, time to readjust. Instead the reality was a special needs student: a new challenge to meet, a child that needed enormous amounts of time and consideration to integrate into the fabric of her grade two classroom. It took until the Christmas break before she got the help that she needed. This is only one woman's experience, only one situation, unique. But it serves as a flag and a warning that it is in the nitty gritty, the practical reality of life in the classroom and the home that our teaching and mothering are actually lived. It is what Adrienne Rich describes as "this activity of world-protection, world-preservation, world-repair -- the million tiny stitches, the friction of the scrubbing brush, the scouring cloth, the iron across the shirt, the rubbing of cloth against itself to exorcise the stain, the renewal of the scorched pot" (1977, p. xvi). For the teacher, it is the paper -- the script marching across the page, the pencils scratching, the paper crumpling and tearing and underfoot, the stacks in the art corner, the stuffed folders and choking filing cabinets. This practical aspect became important for me to understand, because it was easy to sit back and daydream about the potentials and possibilities inherent in the weaving together of teaching and mothering. However, what my conversations with my participants constantly

reminded me was of the day-to-day struggles and lived realities of juggling it all while still being able to somehow find meaning and make sense of those experiences. Both women seemed to appreciate the opportunity to participate in this study because it gave them this opportunity and incentive for reflection. But for each of them, there was always more to do, always someone else asking for something more, including myself, asking for writing, for conversation, for reflection. Characteristically, they were both generous with their time; but also reflecting their new sense of boundaries, they each said "this much, and no more."

In Nadine's response as well as in Sandra's, there is also this awareness of having realigned teaching priorities, of spending the time that one has *well*. There is a more realistic sense of not only what *can* be accomplished, but also what *should* be. Nadine wrote:

In regard to my statement about shifting my focus, I guess I am realizing a new role as a working Mom not only as a teacher. You see, previous to Danielle, work had been the major thrust in my life. It seemed to consume not only "working hours" but hours of my time outside of the school. Not that I didn't enjoy it, mind you -- I liked to challenge myself, think of new ideas and reflect on my approaches. As I look back, I realize I have always had a perfectionist approach to teaching. If things weren't perfect, I felt like a failure. I would take all problems with students personally (e.g. why don't they seem to be learning?) and I never seemed to be able to leave "work at work." (Nadine, Response #2, p.1)

This seemed to be one of Nadine's most significant shifts, this new delineation of work life and family life, this sense of boundary. Sandra, too, spoke of this marking out of territory. She shared that she did not consciously

think very much about her daughter as she taught, although the changes that mothering had made stayed with her. She was aware on some level of where Chelsea would be at certain times of the day -- at music class, having her nap, but that Sandra's focus was on her classroom. In turn, she revealed that she no longer dreams about her students.

In the ten minute drive home it's like I go through a window. In the time it takes me to drive down Deerfoot, I have shed that day. . . .I don't bring one to the other. . . but I'm keeping them apart because. . . I want to do them well, and that involves focusing on my teaching, in and of itself, and then coming home and doing things with Chelsea. (October 25, 1996)

By November, when we were completing the journal, Sandra had turned 180 degrees from where she had been in terms of how she saw the ability to teach well within the time constraints of being a new parent. She had redefined for herself what it meant to be "the good teacher." It no longer meant simply the hours spent in the evening making those special materials. In her final journal entry, she shared this story:

Last week another mother/ teacher made a comment to me that 'ruffled my feathers.' She graduated with me. . . we have kept in touch so she knows what I was like as a teacher prior to Chelsea. Anyway, she asked how school was going and I told her that teaching was certainly different -- I choose my activities and utilize my time differently, now. Her comment back to me was that, "So, you're not the outstanding teacher you once were." Well, I resisted the urge to clarify her conception but I immediately thought to myself, "How interesting that the perception is that now that I have a family my teaching will be less effective -- exactly what I had been concerned about earlier in September." I think now that even

though I, physically, put less time into my teaching the quality is better because my views of children, parents, the role and place of education have all been adjusted. I now see children more 'holistically' and I think I have a better understanding of the complexities of children and particularly their behaviours. In my high needs classroom I think I would have been much more frustrated before because I would not have understood. . . . I can teach these children more patiently and perhaps more empathetically. . . . I guess I want to correct the perception that mothers cannot be as effective teachers -- to correct the view I myself held for many years. (Sandra, Response #4, pp. 1-2)

There is tremendous significance in Sandra's shift in perception that took place over two short months. Again, it is not about whether mothers are better or worse teachers. It is my contention that there are both good teachers and poor teachers alike, and teachers like Sandra were good before they became mothers and are good now. What is important is to see that Sandra is *different* now. She perceives herself to be different and she sees herself in a different way. She has less time and energy to devote to her teaching, but she believes that she uses that time more effectively. She talked about how now she doesn't have the "peripheral frills." Sandra no longer sees those frills as the mark of good teaching. She brings it back around to caring, and as I expressed in my journal, caring not defined by the amount of time devoted to details, but caring reflected in the glance, the contact, the listening ear, the discerning eye of the teacher that is truly present to the child.

Attention, devotion, care, worthiness, cherishing, fostering, renewal, hope: these are not just any words. They echo a deep sense of place, of remaining, of dwelling, of settling. These words bring with them a sense

of memory and continuity and regeneration, a mindfulness of what is needed for life to go on, and a passing on of such mindfulness to the young. Children are already present in these words. (Jardine, 1992, p.175)

Sandra's changed way of thinking brings us up into the awareness of teaching as a human activity. Teaching as art, teaching as reaching out to the child in the classroom. Teaching as seeing. Becoming a mother has helped her to let go of her "specially pre-made materials," or at least, the perception that this is where her caring showed. It is now about the Jessicas and the Tylers in her room. She was aware before September of the impact her caring had on her students and the quality of their learning. But the way in which that caring has been steeped into her room now that the "peripheral frills" are gone has undergone a quiet and delicate transformation. She has grown a bigger heart in the sense that she has a greater capacity for empathy. She cares not more, perhaps, but differently. The mother in Sandra has awoken, and the mother spills over into the paper and the pulse of the classroom. Her new responsibilities and loyalties to the child in her home have forced her to focus and to reassess what is important in teaching. For Nadine, her sense of boundaries has made her life as teacher finite and focused. She wrote: *"Before Danielle, I also felt I had to solve every child's and/or parent's problem, no matter how much time and energy it required. I try not to get so involved now as I need the energy for myself and my own family."* (Nadine, Response #1, p.1)

Although initially teaching from different perspectives: Sandra originally academically focused, Nadine from a rescuing mentality -- it seems to me that they have approached a middle ground through their experiences of becoming mothers. It is as though mothering has taught them about what they value,

about what children need, and about who teachers are. They have become more realistic about the possibilities of their role. Their caring is no longer measured in minutes and hours, but in actions aimed at what will make the most difference in the lives of children: both their own children and the children of their classrooms.

CHAPTER SIX

POSITIONED PRECARIOUSLY

Seeing the world in a particular child and seeing a child in the world deepens our understanding and thus our ability to proceed with care. (Wilde, 1996, p.76)

Having a child changes a woman's perception and asks her to rethink her position in the world, to rethink the children of that world and her relationship to them. Having a child changes our perspective and our understanding of all children. It is not only through knowing a particular child intimately that the world seems transformed. It is through the transformation of self, through the taking on of such a deep responsibility through motherhood that the world is altered. The children of the Other cannot be silenced. Paradoxically, the Other child also attains a certain distance not clearly discerned before. Because we understand bodily the bonds between parent and child, we respect them more fully; we are more apt to tread lightly. There is a boundary. There seems to be a sign marked *this* child is mine -- but *this* child is not. The language here becomes problematic, this language of possession. I do not "own" my children. But this child is mine in the sense that we belong to one another -- the separateness we will attain later cannot belie the initial bond, the tie, the blood that nourishes the fetus even as its heart beats alone. So the child of the Other is not my child. But *in* your child I can now see my own. Consider this story that Sandra tells of a moment when seeing her child in another happened with painful clarity:

Can you handle another sad story? We have a grade one girl with serious behaviours. She destroys books, throws things in her classroom, and hurts other children. She often just curls up on the floor in the fetal position and cries. Her poor teacher cannot handle Courtney in her class of twenty-eight grade ones, so Courtney spends most of her day sitting in a desk at the office. E.C.S. records show that there is a suspicion of sexual abuse in her home. When I learned of Courtney, and saw her behaviour, I was struck -- I literally stopped in the office and stared. I stared at her being pulled down the hallway. But what struck such a terrifying and compassionate chord in me was the fact that she was wearing a sweatshirt that [my daughter] wears. Suddenly, I had connected to her at a very emotional level, because she struck a too-familiar chord. I look at this five year old and think, "Who could do that to this little girl?" From this encounter with Courtney, who is not that much bigger than Chelsea, I now fear my reaction to a situation involving harm to my daughter. I think about Courtney at night. Strange, she's not my student. Yet I feel such compassion and sorrow for this child. I have wondered, "What could I do. . . could I bring her into my class of grade fives when she is removed from her grade one room? How would that help her?" It upsets me that she is isolated when what she needs is positive connection. I feel an overpowering urge to approach her and talk to her. I have to be careful because I have already asked a lot of questions about her. My compassion for her may be strongly influenced by my mothering role, and my intentions are good. However, I may not be welcome in my attempts to become involved in the problems of this little girl. (Sandra, Response #3, pp. 8-9)

This story is such a powerful one because of the strength of the image -- the abused stranger child, dressed in the clothes of Sandra's own. Dramatically, Sandra is "struck" by the sight; it makes her stop -- think, feel, grieve. She sees her child in the child of the Other. It is *not* her child, but what she recognizes in that moment is that it *could be*. This is what becoming a mother does to our perception. It allows us to see, with varying degrees of clarity in different instances, all children as being placed within our circles of care, because each child could be our child. Yet, at the same time, there is a certain inevitable distance. Sandra feels powerless to help this child. She feels required to act yet there are so few avenues for action open to her. In our conversation she revealed that Courtney's mother is protecting the abuser, Courtney's father (is the mother a victim as well?), so although everyone is reasonably sure that the sexual abuse is occurring, nothing can be done about it. Even within the safety of the school, Sandra's opportunity to care for this child in a concrete way is limited by the structure and the routines of a normal school. The child is five; Sandra teaches ten-year-olds. The grade one teacher already has her hands full. The destructive and violent behaviour of the child is a danger to others. So she sits in the office, which, as Sandra comments, is probably not helping her at all. This is the frustrating part -- the part where the need to care is established by the connection Sandra has made, yet the opportunity does not exist in a meaningful way. But sometimes there is the opportunity given to act, and we must be poised for that action.

The transference that Sandra does from Courtney to her child is not something that often occurs to her with other children. It was the coincidence of the sweatshirt that made this event so startling for her. Sandra shared with me that in general, she usually feels great empathy for other parents and children,

but not often does she make a conscious connection to her own child. Yet she wrote:

I have never experienced the heightened intensity of emotions as I have in the last two years. I have been moved to tears watching an Oprah show on child abuse. I picked Chelsea up and rocked her on the floor, crying, while I watched and listened to accounts of care-givers who were video-taped performing various acts of cruelty and neglect to children. I have responded with intense sadness to news reports of girls in Brussels, and infants in intensive care in Lethbridge hospitals -- victims of adult violence. I understand the passion that drives parents to "take action" on behalf of their dead children. When the young girl was abducted from her house in Calgary last year, I felt both terrified and intense anger at the perpetrator. I don't know what I would be capable of doing, if that happened to Chelsea. All acts of cruelty to children, anywhere, can now evoke strong emotional responses from me. I think this is so because that is what ensures the survival of our species. The adults must defend the young, and until you become a parent, you are not aware of just what you will do to protect your young. We are not much different from sow bears. (Sandra, Response #3, pp. 5-6)

This echoes our conversation discussed in Chapter 4, where Sandra and I talked about becoming women of the tribe, and the completing of a circle of care. ("Circles of care" is a term I borrow from Abel & Nelson, 1990.) Even though Sandra may not have been imagining her own child in the terrible situations she wrote of, what is clear is that her child is always *present*. "I picked Chelsea up and rocked her on the floor, crying." A friend shared with

me how she felt motherhood had actually awoken in herself a potential for violence, if her children were to be threatened. She shared with me that for the first time in her life she could actually imagine killing someone. I felt this too; it was a disconcerting feeling, after the birth of my first child, to discern amongst my feelings of deep love and gratitude a nearly murderous protectiveness surrounding my infant. So we now perhaps can understand the actions and feelings of other mothers. But there is also a protectiveness extended to the children of the world.

Here is the crux of the issue. I can see my child in the child of another, but I am clearly conscious now that the child of the Other is not my child. For instance, recall Sandra's first journal where she wrote about how before her daughter she would call her students "her kids" and dreamt of them at night. She no longer dreams of her students; she dreams of her family. But she feels a greater sense of empathy, understanding, and protectiveness towards the children of the world. So it is this precarious positioning of myself towards the children of the world which motherhood brings. *My child in your child, yet thy child is not mine.*

I recall Michael, a student in my first year teaching kindergarten. An exuberant, impulsive child; his birthday was February 28, the last day that kindergartners can turn five. If he had been born March 1, he would have waited another year. He was the youngest child in the room. Furthermore, we know that at this age boys can be developmentally a full year and a half behind some of the girls (Soderman and Phillips, 1986, p. 71). In September, this difference showed. He could not yet form letters, recognize his own name, and when he drew a person it was a giant head -- no body yet appearing. He was not holding a pencil well. Nevertheless, he played cooperatively and joyously.

He thrived on the physical education program and seemed gifted in the area of music -- keeping a beat naturally, rhythmically, with his whole body. Michael had no interest (yet) in writing, painting, drawing, or craft activities. In November, his parents asked if he could spend two years in our E.C.S. program (Early Childhood Services was the designation given our Alberta Kindergarten program.) Fresh from University, well versed in current theory, I felt that retention was an extreme measure, and that Michael was not a candidate. In the three E.C.S. classes at our school, there was a large handful of boys that were at a comparable skill level. And Michael was so social that it seemed he might really feel it when his friends moved on to grade one. I said, "Let's just give him some time." This November conversation initiated a long series of dialogues where Michael's placement for the following fall was discussed. He began to write and recognize letters. His drawings became more mature. He was able to follow the basic routines and to sit still for long enough to listen to a story. By spring, he was even demonstrating some letter-sound correspondence. I felt he was ready. His parents did not. I enlisted the help of school resource people and administration. I provided articles supporting my point of view. I won.

When I look back now, I am profoundly uncomfortable with what happened with Michael. It is not because I am second guessing his readiness for the challenge of grade one; I still believe that I advocated in his best interest. Yet I am left with a sense of disquiet over the role I took on as expert in this situation. I felt I had all the answers. I felt I was "right." I listened to the parents, but perhaps did not respect their expertise on their own child. I don't know what I would do differently now, except that I would tread more carefully. Michael entered grade one. He got glasses. He did all right. He still remained the

impulsive, physical child I knew. He did not shine academically, as perhaps his parents had hoped to encourage by placing him in E.C.S. a second year, but he coped. It is unlikely that Michael would have matured in the way that they expected if he had repeated his kindergarten experience with a new group of younger children. Yet, I no longer feel so sure of myself.

If knowledge about children that stems from research is considered more valid than knowledge about children that comes from parents' stories about their children, then "professionals" will have the edge. If we teach [education] students in a "very traditional, medical model, where research findings are the only 'truth', then it is likely that these students, when they graduate, will have little respect for the 'truths' that parents know about their children." (Schimoni, 1992, p. 109, quoting D. Powell)

I know that my discomfort persists over this incident. When considering these kinds of issues it seems that the world is more grey now -- less black, less white. I am left with questions about the prerogative that a teacher has to intervene into the decisions of the parent. This introduces larger issues about more serious instances where caring for a child and interceding on their behalf may legitimately mean disrespecting boundaries. But these issues seem less simple to me now. And there will be no easy answer, but we must continue to extend ourselves and proceed with care. As Sandra Wilde (1996) wrote in her thesis entitled Awakening Care:

Children do not yet have the voice and the capacity to speak for themselves (of course, this capacity varies depending on the age and maturity of the child). Children need the adults in their lives to be their voice, to speak and act on their behalf; they, "require special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to them from the world"

[Arendt, 1969, p.186]. Thus, it is important that teachers authentically interpret and respond to circumstances, that teachers read situations for possibility, that teachers take hold of their responsibility to act on behalf of their students. (p120)

Becoming more respectful of the boundaries of the parent-child relationship does not mean giving up our responsibility as teachers, of giving up our responsibility to care, our responsibility to act. It means treading more cautiously. It means being more full of care in the sense of seeing your own child in each child and protecting them *"so that nothing destructive may happen to them from the world,"* while at the same time remembering that this is the child of the Other, being ever mindful of boundaries and our precarious position. *In loco parentis* -- in place of the parent -- this phrase is the burden that teachers accept. It is a phrase brimming with meaning now, almost frightening given its deep responsibility. It reminds us that we stand temporarily in place of the parents -- but we do not *re*-place them.

Although she is not parent of these others, she is capable of having been that parent and as such she is entrusted with the same responsibility as the parent. The parent hands over this responsibility to the teacher.

However the teacher's responsibility also has a unique face. . . . She is a way in or point of entry for the child into the wider world of others.

(Lindsay, 1993, p. 39)

There is a fundamental shift of purpose towards children when I become a mother. Before my child was born, I saw in other children *myself as a child*. I projected my needs as a child onto other children, for example, my need for independence. My interpretation of their circumstances was infused with my

N: Same with me. That's exactly it. But that's where my mind shift has taken place. Whereas I think, "No, I go home. I'm responsible for teaching my child how to behave. I'm responsible for making sure my child is fed. I'm responsible for. . . teaching my child how to share. . ." I mean certainly you've got to teach some of these skills, these life long learning skills, right? But they've got to have some foundation before they come to school. . . When they do get into the grades however, you are looking at having the kids for most of their waking hours so you do feel a little bit more responsible there. . . . It sounds like I'm hardening a bit, but I guess I'm seeing it as more as a job than a life, than what I used to be.

M: . . . you assume that once you become a mother that you become softer, but yet, in a way, there almost is this hardening. . . It seems to come up over and over, this thing about responsibility, and this new way of seeing, "Okay, what am I responsible for? What is the child responsible for? What is the parent responsible for? " And that seems to be taking on a whole new picture once you have your own child. . . Whereas before, you sound like . . . you took it all on yourself and then now. . . you're willing to. . . see that other people have their own areas of responsibility.

N: No, that's right. It's just redefining roles, and being able to give up what you used to perceive as being your role as a teacher. Like the teacher was the umbrella but there were all these little strings hanging underneath as to what your role was supposed to be -- you know -- nurse, psychologist, nutritionist. . . and now it's like "Teacher Umbrella", with just the one handle; you're a teacher. That's your job. And the rest

*of it -- you do what you CAN. . . it r
parent.*

*M: But in terms of the caring aspe
classroom, and always felt that you*

*N: No, that hasn't changed. No, t
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say good-bye to them. It's amazing
that this was possible. (October 24*

This part of my conversation with N
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Other. One of the teacher participants rel

Our playground has turned into a giant mud puddle . . . And yesterday, one little boy, from my class fell into it. He slipped and fell and he was soaking wet and *I didn't even notice*. And he went to gym and the gym teacher said, "Barry's soaking wet; he needs some dry clothes." And my first reaction was, "Oh well, he'll just have to wear them; they'll dry." And then I thought, "*Oh . . . If I was his mother would I say that?*" No, I wouldn't . . . I thought about how inconvenient it was to go and get him some dry clothes. And then I found out that two other kids were soaking wet. If I were their mother, I would not make them sit all afternoon in soaking wet clothes. But as a teacher, I'm thinking, "Oh God, I don't have time for this." (pp. 60-61)

This story caught my attention because of the question this teacher asked -- *If I was his mother would I say that?* The answer to the question revealed to her the more caring course of action, even as she is caught up in the busy environment of the classroom, where finding dry clothes for several children is not exactly part of the dayplan. In this incidence the tension of seeing the child through the eyes of the mother, while still living in the reality of the classroom world, is revealed. It shows the particular kind of care that a mother gives, the physical care that feeds and washes and keeps warm and dry.

Survival is not a matter of principles. It is an ecology of space, clean air and water, food, shelter, and care. If women are more sensible about survival, it is because we have been entrusted with the care of other people's bodies, the young and the old. It is the opportunity to care for other people's children that schools can offer us, and that invitation will have to be offered and accepted. (Grumet, 1988, p. 182)

A woman and mother who works in another of the "caring" professions illustrated her perception of the difference that motherhood makes with a question: "If there was a little girl in your class that came to school hungry," she asked, "what would you do?" I thought about the breakfast programs some schools have implemented. I thought about the hundreds and thousands of children that go to school hungry every day and how helping one child would not solve the larger problem. I thought about the ethical considerations and the school policies and the possibility that doing something for today might create greater problems long term. Then I said, "Feed her." She nodded and said, "That is the difference becoming a mother can make." Certainly, a childless teacher might make the same decision. But becoming a mother helps us to see "the world in a child and a child in the world." It makes certain things more complicated, but other things very simple. A mother responds to the hunger or wetness or cold of a child in direct and obvious ways; the child solicits the mother's care (Wynn Leonard, 1996, p. 129). It is the mother in us that helps us to respond to a child in need, disregarding the rules if necessary. Seeing children in this way helps us to respond with care. As Mother Teresa said, "We cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love." Sometimes love, sometimes care, requires us to act. Yet sometimes we are unable to act, and we are left with the heightened awareness and emotions that the new sensitivity to the world's children brings:

When I see a behaviour or response that I don't think is appropriate I wonder why that child behaves that way. I find myself trying to second-guess what the mothers of my students are like. I find myself trying to understand the differences in my students based upon how they may have been raised by their mothers, or in some cases fathers. . . I guess

what really 'gets to me' is how these mothers appear to be so different from me. One little girl was given \$2.00 on Thursday morning to go to Mac's and buy her breakfast. She came to school with a litre of chocolate milk. I thought, "How could her mother do that?" These thoughts and concerns are new to me in the sense that I feel much deeper rage. . . I could in the past, more easily dismiss the actions of my students' mothers because I did not respond to them at a feeling level. Now I do. (Sandra, Response #2, pp. 7-8)

There is a question that is raised, particularly in the instances where caring action is thwarted or impossible, whether heightened emotions, for example, the rage that Sandra often alludes to in her writing, may actually become counter-productive. Her feelings of anger surrounding the lives of children she finds impossible to protect (albeit on her terms) may appear to make her job more difficult, may not serve the children, the parents, or herself. She asks, *"I wonder if the rage that I feel will affect my relationships with them [the parents]" (Response #2, p.8)*. Alternatively, the rage may poise her, may make her ready to jump into the fray and to act with caring when the opportunity presents itself.

In protective work, feeling, thinking, and action are conceptually linked; feelings demand reflection, which is in turn tested by action, which is in turn tested by the feelings it provokes. Thoughtful feeling, passionate thought, and protective acts together test, even as they reveal, the effectiveness of preservative love. (Ruddick, 1989, p. 70)

So Sandra's feelings may not just be a muddying up of Sandra's thinking and actions, but integral to them. The process of feeling, thinking, action, feeling, and so on is a type of caring work experienced by the teacher as well as

the mother. Also, there is an issue of authenticity. Her awareness of her rage on behalf of the world's children allows her to live more authentically with herself and her students. Wilde writes:

I would like to stress that authenticity, as I have interpreted it, is a possibility that arises rather than something we can possess as a permanent trait. By emphasizing the spatial aspect of our being, Heidegger showed that authenticity could be understood to be a *place* to be rather than a quality that individuals possess. It, like caring, is not a thing that some teachers have and some do not. Certain moments arrive with the possibility of authenticity and how we respond in these moments is particularly important. Thus, the existence of authenticity is continually worked out in the particular moments of our lives. (1996, p.132)

This sense of authenticity in my own life as mother and in relation to the world has required me to make some changes in the way I lead my every day life. When I act, whether for my child or for the children of the Other, I must ask if it is consistent and caring. Recently, I signed my organ donor card, through a renewed sense of responsibility to the world. And it was the thought of my own child, imagining her in a hospital, waiting for a kidney or a heart, that caused me to rethink my inattention to that line on the back of my driver's license. (Not my child, but it *could be*.) Noddings (1992) writes, "we must start with a vision of ourselves as wise parents of a large, heterogeneous family and ask, What do I want for all of them? For each of them?" (p. 180). We are more attentive to our children than to ourselves. We often take better care of them than we do ourselves, for example, how many of us construct our children's diets with great care, ensure that they rest enough throughout the day, dress them warmly -- while casually ignoring those same needs of our own bodies. Perhaps the

Golden Rule should be to "Do unto others as you would have done to your children." It reminds me of the song recorded by Sting in the 1980's, a decade gripped by the cold war and the fear of nuclear holocaust -- "I hope the Russians love their children too." Of course they do. This is a common ground we can all stand on. Chesler and Olsen Edwards write evocatively of the changed view and responsibility towards the world that the bodily experience of mothering can bring:

Giving birth changes how you see the world. You know, when I walk down the street I see each person being born. I exist in relation to human vulnerability and nakedness as never before. (Chesler, 1979, p.191)

We stand there, you and I, body to body, and wait. I believe it is the end. I know this holocaust will take not only you and me, but all the world, all children, all trees and songs, all promises. The sirens have sounded and I believe. . . . I hold you and can do nothing. . . . I hold your pulsing wrist to my lips, feel again your struggle to be born, and know I must promise you the only thing I have left. If we live through this night, dear child of my body, if we survive these moments of ultimate madness, I will do what I can to shift the balance. . . . And if, in the end, we lose, I will look at you, straight at you, and say I tried. (Olsen Edwards, 1984, p. 28, as cited in Ruddick, 1989, p. 81)

We want this community of the world to be a safe place for children to grow, to explore, to thrive without want, without fear. Becoming a mother awakens a fierce protectiveness towards all children. Ruddick writes, "Keeping the world safe is human work and in no way the special responsibility of

mothers. Yet I am not surprised when a mother testifies that her love requires a commitment to world protection" (1989, p. 81). Sandra told me that since Chelsea was born that she had become more fearful -- of accidents, of harm coming to those that she loved. Before she began teaching in the fall, she wondered if she would be able to take her class on field trips as she blithely had in the past. She has a heightened sense of responsibility, of fear about unexpected dangers, of protectiveness. Sometimes the world does not seem very safe. Yet we cannot allow our fear to control us. It is this balance, this awareness of the needs of your own child within and among and at times juxtaposed to the world's population of children, that can help us build a better community for all children. Children help us to take the future more seriously. Hannah Arendt (1969) writes of the deep responsibility shouldered by parents and teachers.

Human parents, however, have not only summoned their children into life through conception and birth, they have simultaneously introduced them into a world. In education they assume responsibility for both, for the life and development of the child and for the continuance of the world.

These two responsibilities do not by any means coincide; they may indeed come into conflict with each other. The responsibility for the development of the child runs in a certain sense against the world. . . .

But the world, too, needs protection to keep it from being overrun and destroyed by the onslaught of the new that bursts upon it with each new generation. (p.185-6)

Arendt's warning of the *world's* need for protection is a fascinating perspective. It is all too easy to continuously view children as potential victims. They are indeed vulnerable, but they are also powerful. Their emotions and

bodies and thoughts are not yet under control. Grumet reminds us that the surrender of the body is the undertaking of the classroom (1988, p. 111); schools function to suppress the spontaneous generativity of children. Jardine further explicates this idea, writing:

This is perhaps why "myths show divine-child figures each with special nursing attendants" (Hillman, 1987, p. 113) who have a dual function. They not only protect the child from giving too much; they protect the world from being overrun by the growth that the child portends. . . . There is no set of rules that save us from the agonies of deciding anew, in this case, the delicate balance between our responsibility for the world and our responsibility for the young. . . . One learns that an open and generous (but not licentious and chaotic) relation. . . is an irresolvable, "original difficulty" that we can only learn to live with well. (Jardine, 1993, p. 10-11)

Grumet's exploration of the myth of the child redeemer is helpful, an idea with ancient roots, epitomized in the birth of the Christ child. Unable to save ourselves, we hope that the innocence and latent potential of the next generation will redeem what we have lost -- will somehow transcend our ability to teach them to achieve something great. Grumet contends that this conception is flawed, for as we protect this innocence and naiveté, we preclude the redemption from occurring. "Ironically, the attempt to protect children from the corruption of the adult world mean[s] withholding from the very persons appointed to save society the social skills and knowledge the task demand[s]" (1988, p. 155). Instead, Grumet advocates the raising of "lying daughters." These I understand to mean not children who are untruthful, but rather children who are encouraged to participate authentically in the world:

It is not the son's innocence but the daughter's lies that offer us redeeming knowledge. In showing us the world as they would have it, they reveal the world that we fled because we were not brave enough to pitch our tents and raise our flags there. Their lies can become our knowledge. Because the classroom is *not* the kitchen, because the teacher is *not* the mother, the child's fantasies can flower in the fictive ground of the curriculum. School is not the real world. . . (1988, p. 162)

Arendt's concern for the protection of the world from the generativity of the young, and Grumet's conception of lying daughters, remind us of the participatory relationship that children have with the world, for "children do not simply receive the world that is offered" (Ruddick, 1989, p. 88). In living with children, there is a temptation to succumb to a love affair with children's innocence, wonder, and fresh vision of the world. We do not wish for them to become disillusioned too soon, and we experience pain when the world intrudes prematurely on the child. Yet, there is also an expectation that children acquire our ideals of truth and morality and distinguish fantasy from reality; they are expected to prepare themselves to live in the world while being sequestered from it. Grumet encourages us to allow children to reside in the world and thus teach us about it through their unusual and generative perceptions. Arendt warns against the idealization of children, and particularly of children's play (1969, p. 183) as this idealization may prevent children from learning to live in the world well. If maternal work, as Ruddick suggests, is to "protect, nurture, and train" (1989, p.23), and if, as teachers, our role also involves introducing the child to the world and the world to the child, we must then proceed with great attentiveness and care:

Insofar as the child is not yet acquainted with the world, he must be gradually introduced to it; insofar as he is new, care must be taken that this new thing comes to fruition in relation to the world as it is. In any case, however, the educators here stand in relation to the young as representatives of a world for which they must assume responsibility although they themselves did not make it, and even though they may, secretly or openly, wish it were other than it is. This responsibility is not arbitrarily imposed upon educators; it is implicit in the fact that the young are introduced by adults into a continuously changing world. Anyone who refuses to assume joint responsibility for the world should not have children and must not be allowed to take part in educating them. (Arendt, 1969, p. 189)

As Arendt shows us, taking on responsibility for the world through our own children and the children of others is intrinsic to both maternal and educative tasks. In thinking of what we want the world to become, we must not relinquish a realistic view of what it *is*. And in finding joy in the joyfulness of the child, and in wanting to preserve that innocence which renews our hope in the world, we must not overprotect children from the world because it circumvents the possibility of them participating in the world fully enough to transform it. Finally, what ultimately must sustain us in our precarious position towards the children of the world is hope: an authentic, hopeful yet realistic attitude towards both the world and its children, a hopeful attitude that encompasses what the world will mean to the child, what the child might do in and for the world, and what the world might become. As Max Van Manen asks, "Would the meaning of teaching lose its fundamental meaning if it were not sustained by hope" (1992, p.109)?

CHAPTER SEVEN

IDENTITIES: WHERE THE LINE IS DRAWN

This conversation is a conversation among exiles. We are all, men and women alike, exiles from the maternal body and homesick for the fullness of the mother's gaze. For in that gaze we are given to ourselves surely and wholly -- visible. . . . Vulnerability recognized and named, I think, pleads for alternative practice. . . . As exiles, we form our own communities. We can speak together a common language and make a home for ourselves in this world. (Pagano, 1990, p.155)

The line drawn between being a mother and being a teacher should be an obvious one. It should be clear because of the clean relationship between oneself and the child; I mother my own child, while I teach the children of the Other. But as the previous chapters have shown, the issue is not so simple as the relationships imply. Becoming a mother changes the teacher. And there are times when the actions of the caring teacher may be seen as mothering actions, and as certainly, a mother teaches her child. So where is the line drawn? Where should it be drawn? When am I teaching? When am I mothering? Should I be mothering the child of the Other? In what situations is it necessary or justified for me to be treading on what Grumet refers to as "the nurturant ground of another woman" (1988, p. 178)? And if I shy away from mothering the children of the Other, then do I risk a sterile, uncaring, unnurturant classroom? This chapter attempts to get beneath this question, which at its root is a question of teacher identity. It is also a question born out of this particular time, place, and culture in which I participate. Ruddick exposes the dilemma of ethnocentricity which this question faces.

The peculiarities of my experience affect my fundamental conceptions of maternal thinking and work. For example, I devised a way of speaking that honours women who give birth as well as adoptive mothers who may be grandmothers, aunts, fathers, or persons biologically unrelated to their children. I write out of a middle-class, technocentric, property-oriented culture ambivalently obsessed with the bonds of biology. But even in my own country, many communities of Native Americans would find my efforts strangely belaboured since such a double honouring of birthgiving and adoptive mothering is already richly inscribed in their culture. . . . I make claims about *all* children and I believe them. But I make those claims out of a particular intellectual training and Protestant heritage that taught me to look for human needs and desires underlying the divisions between women and men and between cultures. (1989, p.54-55)

Although the question of where the line is drawn between teaching and mothering is culturally located, and although there certainly will be no definitive, univocal answer, it is a question still worth exploring. It is an important question because of the struggle it engenders; teachers must come to terms with it, and becoming a mother complicates the issue and brings it to the fore.

Throughout her journal and our conversations, Sandra felt strongly that a large part of her work in the classroom was mothering work. She seemed to define teaching as the more technical aspects of her work in being able to successfully improve the skills of her students and transmit the curriculum. She saw the caring actions as mothering ones, a conception that I continued to probe throughout our dialogues. She wrote:

I cannot teach without bringing my mothering instincts to it. . . . These students need, above all, a figure that they can trust, feel safe with, learn

from. When you teach these "high needs" students, I see this as your most fundamental responsibility. . . . There are some children who simply cannot learn how to punctuate a sentence until they can deal with their own family problems. To that end, I approach them first as someone who is secure, calm, quiet, safe, positive, encouraging and supportive. These are fundamentally mothering qualities and I cannot separate them from my teaching responsibilities. After I have established a relationship of trust and security with these students, and only then, could I ever hope of "teaching" them something from a curriculum document. (Sandra, Response #2, pp. 8-9)

It is difficult to untangle the strands of teaching and mothering. Recall in Sandra's first journal entry, before she began teaching again in autumn, she recognized that it was her caring that had made her a strong teacher before. She was worried that she would not have the time or the emotional energy to care as deeply. Now she associates her caring with her mothering; although the caring was present in her teaching before, it has now become interpreted through her feelings and experiences as mother. In my response I had asked about whether it was appropriate to be mothering other people's children (a question I had never asked myself before I had children of my own). She seemed nettled, writing:

Maybe I am rationalizing my own behavioural responses to these students but I look around me and see that same response occurring. If I am wrong then many good teachers are also wrong. True, in teaching we are denied the duration of time to see the fruition of our efforts, but we must still make the effort nonetheless. As to the appropriateness of these

mothering actions, I say, "What else can we do?" (Sandra, Response #2, p. 9)

"What else can we do?" This is a question which springs from the caring teacher who is presented with a child in need. As explored in the last chapter, it is the child in need that the mother within us responds to specifically and in the moment. It is not to solve the problems of the world or to rescue the child, but simply to feed, keep warm, to nurture the fragile self-esteem of the small child where required. These actions Sandra now sees as being mothering. But they are also teaching actions. Allowing children to maintain their dignity, protecting them from harm, supporting their learning -- these are the actions of the genuine teacher. Where is the line drawn? In this next passage from Sandra's journal is revealed the apparent inextricability of this phenomenon:

We obviously see traits in ourselves which lead us into teaching careers. However, having a child heightens the strength with which we connect to children. Even with less time, we encounter and connect with children perhaps more intensely. Being a mother has taught me how to respond to the needs of my child. I think I am better at responding to the emotional needs of my students now because of this. It is difficult to say what influences what, though, because some of what I bring to my mothering I recognize as coming from my background in pedagogical theory -- especially regarding children's behaviours. Anyway, I think that once you have responded to the needs of your own children you may be quicker and more efficient at recognizing and responding to the needs of students -- particularly emotional needs. Mothers who are teachers who also read feminist pedagogy are even more aware of how their nurturing classroom glances are rooted in their mothering behaviours. We cannot

not do this because this is who we are now. I like what Noddings said about teachers and mothers being partners and not adversaries. I guess I recognize how important it is to work together with mothers, and what Noddings said about not blaming the other has become more pertinent to me. (Sandra, Response #3, p. 6-7)

"This is who we are now." This is a phrase that rings out through the journals and throughout this project. We are mothers now, and there is no going back to being exactly as we were, even though we return to the environment and the task of teaching that we undertook before. There is a second point, one previously unaddressed, which is that as much as we have been exploring how becoming a mother weaves its way into teaching, there is also a place where being a teacher affects us as mothers. Teachers may mother differently. In the same way that doctors are aware and knowledgeable about the health of their children on a level inaccessible to the lay person, so the teacher has background in child development and pedagogy and experience with large numbers of children that cannot help informing his or her parenting. As I contemplate preschools for my daughter, I have a confidence I do not feel in other areas. I know what I am looking at; I know what I am looking for. As Sandra points out, being immersed in literature, whether feminist pedagogy or otherwise, adds a further dimension. Her recognition that partnering with parents is more meaningful to her now also carries significance. Her struggle not to blame, to build positive relationships with parents is evident throughout her writing.

Finally, there is an undercurrent present in Sandra's writing, which needs to be addressed. It is the viewpoint and stance of seeing mothering as *synonymous* with caring, as being connected to the private world: the world of

senses and feeling, of corporeality, of emotion. It is the *emotional* needs of her students that Sandra feels she responds to more effectively through being a mother. This is an understandable and accepted way of viewing mothering, of viewing caring. The teacher is seen as representative of the public world: of intellect, of reason -- traditionally the male realm. To Sandra, teaching is about curriculum. Let me be clear; Sandra is not wrong. Her experience of mothering as caring is true as she lives it. But this language and association of caring and emotion and mothering with the private world -- and teaching, curriculum, and thinking with the public world is a taken-for-granted notion that needs to be unraveled. Is there a third alternative? It is the dichotomy between these two worlds that writers such as Grumet argue against, because it limits both worlds and places them in opposition to one another:

As we study the forms of our own experience, not only are we searching for evidence of the external forces that have diminished us; we are also recovering our own possibilities. We work to remember, imagine, and realize ways of knowing and being that can span the chasm presently separating our public and private worlds.

Women who teach make the passage between the so-called public and private worlds daily. . . back and forth between the experience of domesticity and the experience of teaching, between being with one's own children and being with the children of others, between being the child of one's own mother and the teacher of another mother's child, between feeling and form, family and colleagues. (Grumet, 1988, p. xv)

We need to be careful when interpreting our caring actions and attention to emotional needs as being the mothering actions. There is a danger in creating a false sense of dichotomy -- feminine, caring, emotional aspects on

one side, male, objective, intellectual qualities on the other. The dichotomy is often also read into the difference between teaching at the primary level versus teaching at the secondary level. It is no coincidence that most male teachers teach high school. It is part of this non-coincidence that until a few short decades ago elementary teachers were paid half what their secondary counterparts earned. It is a central difficulty in all of the caregiving professions: another classic example is nursing. The perception is that caring is not difficult; anyone can care (Wilde, 1996, p. 6). And along with this is the diminishment of women's ways of being in the world.

It is likely that the commonly accepted stereotype of women's thinking as emotional, intuitive, and personalized has contributed to the devaluation of women's minds and contributions, particularly in Western technologically oriented cultures, which value rationalism and objectivity (Sampson, 1978). It is generally assumed that intuitive knowledge is more primitive, therefore less valuable, than so-called objective modes of knowing. (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p.6)

There is a sense in which women attain inferiority through their more bodily and biological attachments to the reproductive tasks of society. While the inchoate desire for reconnection to the maternal body is experienced, it is simultaneously feared and resented. The patriarchy fears women and their closer connection to the earth, their guarantee of maternity while paternity is only implied, their creative role in reproducing the race. We are not talking about this man or that, but as a system the gender has felt required to control women in order to contain this spontaneous generativity (O'Brien, 1981).

More deeply, so long as we fear and deny the distinctly female character of birth, we risk losing the symbolic, emotional, and ultimately political

implications of birth itself. There is a philosophical tradition that honours mind over body, idea over matter. . . a tradition that feeds off fear and contempt for female procreative bodies. . . . The vocabulary of reproduction, with its heavy emphasis on repetition and its indebtedness to the material production of inanimate goods, misses altogether the originality of birth. An infant is born into a social context and therefore into a past. Yet an infant is also a beginning. To give birth is to create a new life. Mothering is a sustained response to the promise embedded in that creation. (Ruddick, 1989, p.49)

Thus the urgent impulse to pull teaching into the public world, to professionalize, to distance the teacher from the students and their parents (Katz, 1980, 1984, 1988, as interpreted by Schimoni, 1992, pp. 102-105). Thus the call for objective checklists and evaluations, time on task assessments, grades, standardization. There is a desire to leave behind the stickiness and warmth of the home and replace it with more so called serious and prestigious endeavours. Yet, teaching is really a public forum for the reproductive tasks of society, otherwise reserved for the home. So the teacher is placed in a role that has dual implications.

It is the female elementary schoolteacher who is charged with the responsibility to lead the great escape. At the sound of the bell, she brings the child from the concrete to the abstract, from the fluid time of the domestic day to the segmented schedule of the school day, from the physical work, comfort, and sensuality of home to the mentalistic, passive, sedentary, pretended asexuality of the school – in short, from the woman's world to the man's. She is a traitor, and the low status of the teaching profession may be derived from the contempt her betrayal

draws from both sexes. Mothers relinquish their children to her, and she hands them over to men who respect the gift but not the giver. (Grumet, 1988, p. 25)

Part of the purpose behind this project is this deep confusion and disagreement over the role of mothering in teaching. What I am attempting to uncover is the way in which becoming a mother changes the *teacher*, and thus the teaching. This project is not attempting to suggest that teachers do or should *mother* their students. Jipson writes of the impositional nature of this kind of teaching, this smothering:

As I look back, I recognize that I had been seduced by the notion of being the good mother, creating an alternate family in the classroom, caring for the students in the belief that they, like good children, would sustain me and care for me, too. . . . But in this class it was not working right. Not all of my students understood mothering to be synonymous with nurturing or caring. Some found my "connected" teaching style impositional. (Jipson, 1995, p.29)

Jipson's experience was one of eventually rejecting the metaphor of teacher as mother. Her arguments expose the need to draw the line *somewhere*, to realize that indeed the teacher is *not* the mother. Ultimately there must be some boundaries. For me, becoming a mother has helped me to recognize and respect the existence of these boundaries -- because I now see that no one else can mother my child as I do, I realize I cannot be a mother to another mother's child. And what Sandra sees to be "mothering" can also be read as caring *through* her identity and sensitivity as a mother. I believe that we were using different terms to express the same phenomenon. She spoke, during our conversation, about the need to respect the values of the community

even when they were in direct opposition to her own. A mother does not have a need for that special kind of caring distance that a teacher must allow in her classroom. Nadine writes of this greater sense of breathing room, and of a greater sense of clarity regarding her identity in different contexts:

My focus is shifting to having a greater balance. I am realizing slowly, that I'm not supposed to be able to fix or change everything in each student's life given the time I have them. My job is to teach them, provide them with good opportunities to learn and to turn them on to learning. I am then "allowed" to enjoy my other life as a mother, wife and individual.
(Nadine, Response #2, pp. 1-2)

On this issue of teacher-mother identity, the contrast between the two participants is striking and telling. They both feel very differently about this question of whether one mothers students. But bear in mind, each began in a very different place. Sandra's teaching was originally academically driven, and the transmission of the curriculum content was and is how she defines "teaching." So it is only natural that she locate caring and connection in her mothering identity.

M: *And is nurturing mothering?*

S: *Mmm-hmm [affirmative]*

M: *Because nurturing . . . and caring is part of teaching, and it's part of mothering. But being a mother is also . . . all the decision making that we do, that we don't do for the kids that we teach. . . .*

S: *The question was: is nurturing mothering?*

M: *What I'm asking is. . . is where the line is drawn between mothering and teaching. . . if they're not the same thing --*

S: *Hmmm. I wonder if what I do, in my classroom, that could be called "mothering", are those actions that are based on -- meeting the non-academic needs, meeting the social-emotional needs. I think even though teaching theoretically is supposed to look at the whole child, it doesn't. It focuses primarily on the acquisition of knowledge, maybe secondarily, the acquisition of proper behaviour. Those are the two big ones in schools. That's teaching. But what we do around that, to meet children's needs emotionally, and to help them socially, that's where the mothering comes in, or fathering.*

M: *But when you're saying mothering in that context, you're talking about the nurturing aspects. . . where you have to stop yourself at some point.*

S: *What you're doing is you're not trying to teach them anything, you're trying to help them . . . long term. Like I'm looking at Junior High-ish, High School years, and I'm looking at what can I do to help these kids survive the next six years in school. And I'm trying to give them attitudes that are going to help them survive and maybe get out of that area. That's mothering, that's not teaching them. Teaching them is curriculum-bound. That's my perception of it. (October 25, 1996)*

This aspect that Sandra hits upon, of a significant difference between teaching and mothering being the time invested into the child, is an important one. It is the caring teacher who is able to look beyond the end of the year, perhaps with its round of provincial testing, and look at what the child needs in the long term. Thus we talk about "life long learning" and "life skills." But further, we need to examine this perception of teaching as being bound by a curriculum document. We need to ask if this is what it is. Perhaps early

childhood educators are spoiled in the sense that their day-to-day teaching is not driven as strongly by a given curriculum which in turn may be driven by exams. Perhaps the early childhood educator is more accustomed to integrating social, emotional, and physical needs into the academic ones, simply because it is so very necessary with such young children. Yet, at any level, good teachers are defined by their caring. I recall one of my graduate courses, where we related one of our most successful teaching experiences. What was common amongst all the stories was that it was the human moments that made us feel most like teachers. I recall one colleague who was raised and taught in the Far East with a teaching environment regimented beyond anything we experience in Canada. Yet, it was the day that a cat found its way into a cupboard in her classroom and gave birth to her kittens that this teacher remembered. Ask anyone about the teachers that made a difference in their lives and they will tell a story of caring that goes beyond a curriculum document. And this is not limited to mothers or women or teachers of young children. I recall another story, told by a friend who was fourteen when she became dangerously anorexic. She lost forty pounds in two months, limiting herself to twenty-five calories a day. She believes that it was a teacher who saved her life, a man who noticed, who took her aside and talked to her and told her frankly how worried he was about her. His caring saved her life; she was able to eat again.

If it is the caring and long term awareness that makes us good teachers, then it is clear where the connection to mothering comes in. Mothers, also, are in it for the long haul. But there are some important differences. Wynn Leonard (1996) argues that mothering is a deeply specific and consuming practice:

The child is the focal point in the mother's life. She sees her mothering as a "calling" and all other concerns and commitments as relativized by her commitment to her child. . . . Within the practice, a mother develops skill and an understanding of mothering, thereby extending the practice. She measures herself against very particular paradigms of mothering which embody, for her, excellence for the practice. When she seeks substitute care for her child, she makes an ethic of care a more salient requirement than professional knowledge of child development and childrearing strategies. (p. 129)

As teachers, we must tread carefully. There is a place where we have the potential to impose too much on the children of our classrooms and their families. This is how Nadine responded in our conversation to the same question I asked of Sandra above:

N: I think before I had my own children I was more of a teacher-mother. And it goes back to wanting to solve everything for these kids, and do everything for these kids, that I felt wasn't being met for them at -- outside the classroom or whatever. Off the side of that again, though, is that really a mother-teacher role, or is that a middle class teacher role? Am I putting my middle class values on that child? Maybe they've got a different value system that I don't have a right to infringe upon. (October 25, 1996)

Our job is not to step in and make decisions or impose value judgments or to choose a path for our students. I do not know why it was the teacher, not the parent, who saw that my friend was starving herself. But he did not step in as parent and lead her. He supported her and cared for her without imposing. We

can be caring teachers beyond the content. As women who are mothers who are teachers, we can care like a mother, but act like a caring teacher.

Imbedded within this issue of imposition is a whole other perspective, one that is more socially critical in its conception and orientation. Nadine's comments bring into question this metaphor of the teacher-mother as being a middle class creation. It brings into focus issues of power and control. Apple writes:

I argued strongly that education was not a neutral enterprise, that by the very nature of the institution, the educator was involved, whether he or she was conscious of it or not, in a political act. . . in the last analysis educators could not fully separate their educational activity from the unequally responsive institutional arrangements and the forms of consciousness that dominate advanced industrial economies like our own. (1979, p.1)

If in teaching we seek to liberate through education, is becoming a mother to our students the best way to achieve this? Again, the depth of our caring resonates with our initiation into motherhood. We see children with new eyes. But the children of the Other do not become our children. Nor, in most cases, would they want to be. Think of how much influence this gives us over their lives, their minds, their thoughts; think of the responsibility. It is the voice of our mother that we each carry with us.

As Jipson noted, not everyone may identify with the mother as being nurturing – not all mothers are. Ideally, nurturing and caring are part of both the home and the classroom; nurturing and caring are what makes a place a good environment for children. Like Jipson and Nadine, we may at some point like the image of ourselves as the "mother-sugar". But is this the most effective

teacher? We saw in previous chapters how the emotional depth of the mother may indeed interfere at times with effective teaching. Not to imply that the teacher should be remote, authoritarian, clinical. However there is an important boundary that must be located somewhere. Jipson writes of the utter confusion she experienced in trying to build the "perfect" environment for her mother-teacher role with her graduate students:

By simply being in the classroom, I was still "in control." It seemed at the time necessary for me to relinquish that control if the romanticized relationships of the seminar were to work. Conflict and pain over issues of responsibility welled up in me, and I realized that I could not simultaneously be the mother of all of them, nor did they want me to be. Their needs and expectations were so different. . . I became paralyzed, enmeshed in preserving the illusion of the happy family, unsure of what my role as teacher should be. (1995, p.32)

There are two aspects here that are noteworthy. One is Jipson's point that she "could not simultaneously be mother to all of them." This is a significant difference between teaching and mothering. The mother focuses all of her energies on her own child. She will take action on behalf of her child, even at the expense of another. It is all for one. The teacher must weigh equally the needs of all the children placed in her care -- one for all. Secondly, Jipson points out that her students each were so different -- and this is the crux of this chapter. For knowing what action is most caring, most appropriate, most needed as teacher and as mother, depends on the situation and the context and the child. So in asking where the line is drawn between teaching and mothering, the rather unsettling answer is that it *depends*. As Dr. Jim Field so often repeated in his course on qualitative research (1995), "it *depends*" is the

interpretive answer to complex questions, because "it depends" is the only way to honour the "original difficulty" (Caputo, 1987) of our lives. Finally, there is her confusion over what her role is as teacher. If she cannot become the "good mother," literally or figuratively, to all her students, is the alternative what Freire refers to as the Teacher-banker, where:

- (a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- (b) the teacher know everything and students know nothing;
- (c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- (d) the teacher talks and the students listen -- meekly;
- (e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- (f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
- (g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- (h) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
- (i) the teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects. (Freire, 1970, as cited in Pinar, 1975, p.361)

If not the mother-sugar, if not the teacher-banker, then what? These images of teaching limit and convict. If we do not want to live in a polarized world, where home is the realm of the feminine, of sensuality and feeling, where the public world is the male world -- the patriarchal stronghold with a corner on intellect and reason, then what? Is it necessary for the teacher to choose one of these worlds for the classroom? Grumet reminds us that the origin of the word

"pedagogy" is *paidagogos*, the Greek slave who escorted the child from the home to school, the private world to the public (1988, p. 164). And as Grumet suggests, although teaching became largely feminized in the last century, at a time when motherhood was largely romanticized and placed on a pedestal, the women who chose teaching did it as a way to escape into the public world, the world of their fathers. In some respects, they became slaves to patriarchy, perpetuating the systematic power structure through the institutions of schools. Now, writers like Noddings are contributing to bringing female ethics of care into the classroom. This is what happens when women teach AS mothers. As long as we continue to uphold and support this dichotomy, we will continue to travel back and forth between these two worlds; we will continue to experience apparently opposing demands of nurturance versus knowledge and skills. The mother is at war with the school, the caring with the curriculum. The slave is powerless, and continues to pace restlessly between worlds, child in tow. Perhaps there is another way.

The situation is like that in the physiological and physical context where a man is provided with two arms so that he can have a tensioned grasp of an object from both sides when he wants to include it in some useful action. An object cannot be picked up with just "one"; it takes at least "two" in suitable opposed yet unified tension to grasp "one". . . . The wrong and the danger come when a person forgets that the two arms of a man (or the two ends of a dichotomy) are useful because they are protrusions of *one* system. They allow a sense of differentiation out at their ends, but it is their togetherness in one that makes the difference a connection. Realized as differentiations-within-one, and therefore as connections, polarities can promote richness of integration, increased

self-awareness and affirmation. Taken as divisions-in-two, polarities promote disintegration and denial of self. (Mooney, 1975, p.197)

Acknowledging our teaching and mothering tasks as differentiations-in-one rather than divisions-in-two opens up a whole new framework for how we relate to children. We cannot completely blend the two roles, because always there is this consciousness of other peoples' children as being the Other, while with one's own child there is a sense of permanence and of intimacy, if not possession. But Mooney's metaphor of the opposite arms of one person helps to illuminate how this phenomenon, this apparent dichotomy can function to bring wholeness, "richness of integration, increased self-awareness and affirmation." Grumet's conception of "thinking back through our mothers" (1988, p.187), a task borrowed from Virginia Woolf, is helpful in seeing how this can philosophically be achieved. She writes,

This is the art that women who teach must bring to our work, studying the relations in which we came to form. . . . It is an archaeology not of them but of our relation to them. It is the question of how to be separate and still recognize them in us, us in them, and us in each other. (Grumet, 1988, p. 191)

This thinking back means that we reclaim our histories and a middle ground in the classroom between our productive and reproductive projects. Becoming a mother adds another layer to the already layered existence of a woman who is daughter, sister, and teacher to the children of others. How can this function in the day-to-day life of the school? Grumet posits one practical suggestion which when implemented can make all the difference in a classroom, to teachers, mothers, and children:

The presence of parents in classrooms is essential if teachers and parents are going to trust one another, but it is also essential if parents are going to develop that concern for each other's child necessary to undermine the categorical and competitive character of schooling. When I have typed the story that your child reads or have tied his shoe or found his scarf, when you have told my child a story of your own or have helped her catch the bus, other people's children become our children. This kind of contract is a wide embrace that, allowed duration, contains the implicit as well as the explicit, possibility as well as achievement.

(Grumet, 1988, p.179)

My first year teaching, I slipped into a well-established early childhood program. One aspect was a thriving volunteer program, with several parents in the classroom at almost any given time. In general, they did busy work -- all the cutting and pasting and laminating and photocopying that continued to pile up. They were helpful and efficient. They sat in a corner, keeping an eye on the proceedings and their child, occasionally foraging out when asked to write down a story dictated by a child or to sit at the art center. Overall, though, they were in a position to watch, to judge, to discuss the merits and shortcomings of our classroom as they sharpened pencils or stapled booklets. I felt this was detrimental to the general sense of morale, and it certainly made me uncomfortable -- being constantly the object of these critical glances. The following year, we reshaped the volunteer program. On Mondays, parents came in and were assigned small groups of children to play games such as snakes and ladders or alphabet bingo. (Once a week we still had a group that took care of our now pared down need for material preparation.) On Fridays, parents came and took individual children into the hallway or to the library for

book sharing. The difference in the feeling in the classroom and in the conversations I had with parents was dynamic. There was a shift; parents had now been brought into the legitimate work of the classroom. They were able to experience the wide variety of skills and development exhibited by our students. They grew to care about the children of the class, individually and specifically. They would come to me and say, "Have you noticed that Melissa has learned all the lower case letters?" "Zachary was so much better today in small groups." "Danny was able to retell this whole story to me! He really loves it!" The children were so proud of the work their parents were doing, and all of the children began to recognize in the other parents of the classroom a caring community of adults.

This positive experience, I believe, is the kind of work we need to do in classrooms to extend the circles of care outward. In the new volunteer program, lines between the teacher and the mothers became more blurred, and this served to help each appreciate the other more. I found that instead of becoming critical, and far from taking over, the parents in my room gained a new respect for the work of teaching. They found out it was hard. In working with five small children, they could appreciate the challenges of teaching twenty-five. And they grew to care for all the children of the room, instead of viewing them as competition for the resources they wanted for their own. Two mothers were worried about a severe speech delay one of the girls in my room was experiencing. Carmen was working with a speech therapist, but the therapist's time was limited, and so was the mother's -- a single, working parent with other children to care for. These parents came in, and with the permission of Carmen's mother, were trained by the speech therapist, and played speech games with Carmen and recorded their observations on her progress on a

weekly basis. They dealt with issues of confidentiality and trust, just as a teacher does. They made a significant difference to this little girl. It was this kind of caring, and the willingness of people to act on their sense of caring, that changed the undercurrents and scripting of our classroom. A community was created that continued to respect agreed upon boundaries. It was no longer a question of us and them. And it was not integrating or interchanging the roles. It was allowing the "differentiation-in-one" to make all the difference.

We must make peace with the women who teach our children and acknowledge our solidarity with the mothers of other people's children if we are going to reclaim the classroom as a place where we nurture children. (Grumet, 1988, p. 179)

While pursuing an integrated view of how one can live with the differing identities of teaching and mothering, I realized that I have abandoned my participants with their distinct and separate voices. I could identify with Wilde (1996) in her thesis as she wrote, "I noticed my natural tendency to want to fix things up and make them better" (p. 29). She reminds us of Caputo's assertion (1987) that "the process of interpretive research involves the difficult task of exposing the messy particulars of life without falling prey to the metaphysical tendency to clean up the mess" (Wilde, p. 29). The differing perspectives of the participants on the nature of their roles in the classroom have presented me with an original difficulty in the sense of coming to a point of closure within this question of teaching and mothering identities. However, perhaps it is the messy particulars, the distinct voices of the participants which is the story that needs to be told. It is time to invite them back into the conversation, because it is in interpreting "life as it is actually lived" (Jardine, 1990, p. 222) that interpretive research "raises the possibility of real hope, i.e., the hope that life as it is

actually lived can be faced" (p. 226). Perhaps it is the very fact that Sandra and Nadine have come to live this question in dichotomous ways that is the point. Even if a person needs to reach with both hands in order to pick up an object, each of us favours our right hand or our left. Sandra has not abandoned her earlier conceptions of teaching in favour of mothering, but she more often is reaching with her mothering hand. Nadine now finds greater strength and clarity in using her teaching hand more often in her classroom. Yet these two differentiations make up a whole for each woman. As pointed out earlier, these two teachers began in very different places, and have moved closer together towards a middle space. It is the experience of becoming mothers that has required them to ask themselves profound questions about the nature of teaching and mothering identities. As Jardine (1993) points out, "interpretation has been described as 'restoring life to its original difficulty' (Caputo, 1987)" (p. 4). And perhaps it is not the answers, but the questioning that maternal thinking engenders, and how it returns us to our original difficulties, which is most significant.

For teachers, becoming conscious of how mothering has changed us helps to live the reality of teaching more sensitively. And this sensitivity is not strictly limited to teachers who have become mothers as though it were some kind of club with a special membership. Other teachers, reflective, caring, may have this kind of awareness of children and the world within which they are placed, that motherhood tends to initiate. We see the child with new eyes, and we must keep our eyes open -- not looking romantically at the child we imagine, or a romanticized relationship between ourselves and the child, but at the child who is really there, the child who needs us to see, to care, to act.

These children in this classroom, this teacher, are not distant objects to which our only relatedness is one forged out of a calm, methodological indifference; they are us, our kind, our kin, and understanding them is understanding our kinship with them, understanding, not severing, the ties that already bind us to the Earth, to our lives, the lives of our children. (Jardine, 1990, p. 226)

CHAPTER EIGHT

LIVING THROUGH, LIVING WITH

Teaching out of our own being is both hope and burden. It pushes us to be more thoughtful, more reflective, more analytical, more careful. It demands self-scrutiny, self-awareness, and a willingness to hold judgments and choices contingently. It promises a deeper fulfillment. . . a greater intentionality for teachers. (Ayers, 1992, p.264)

The question of this study has been about uncovering the ways in which the mother finds her way into teaching. As Bergum so clearly demonstrates, the experience of pregnancy, giving birth, and caring for one's infant is a transformative experience. And through this experience, the teacher is also changed. The woman who teaches, pauses and becomes a mother, and then returns to her educative work, returns changed. Her priorities, her ability to empathize and understand other mothers and fathers, her perception of children, her perception of herself, and her perception of the world -- all have become realigned through her new identity. However, her purpose is not to become a mother to her students. She is still a teacher, and each teacher must struggle with the implications and challenges and definitions of that role. But her transformation to mother places her in a new relationship with the world and its children. She is in a new, precarious position.

These have been the arguments of this thesis. Through the journals and dialogues with the participants, this project has attempted to uncover the ways in which the teacher is changed through the birth of her own child. Each woman involved in this project experienced the phenomenon differently. And their individual ways of coming to terms with the tensions within the

phenomenon expose the original difficulty inherent in the work of teaching and mothering. There have also been common threads and themes. Along with many other women I have spoken to, Sandra and Nadine felt that they could empathize with and understand the parents of their students better. They understand what it is to be a parent. Both Sandra and Nadine struggle with the challenges of balancing the demands of their professional and familial obligations, with balancing the children of the Other with their own child, with their own need to be out in the world and their need for their child. To a greater extent, Sandra has taken on the children of the world; she has emotional investments and an expanded sense of responsibility towards the students in her classroom who need so much. Yet, as she admits, she no longer dreams of her students. When she drives home, she "goes through a window." She has let go in order to extend herself and her energy for the hard work of raising her own child, the one for whom she is completely responsible. She writes: *"What becoming a mother has done [is something] to my sense of naivety -- I no longer think I will transform the lives of my students"* (Sandra, Response #3, p. 7).

Nadine is more conscious of this letting go aspect, because before her child was born, she approached teaching as rescuing, from the perspective of feeling that she had to be everything to her students, that she had to solve every problem, make up for everything she perceived them to be "missing" at home. She now has a greater sense of perspective and balance as to what her role is as teacher, as to what is possible. She said, *"You do what you CAN."* This is something that the mother too must learn, or, "her life would be unbearable" (Ruddick, 1989, p. 35). Caring for her own child well has helped Nadine to see that other people have areas of responsibility, not just herself, that just as she takes responsibility for her child, so too are other parents responsible. And just

as she hopes to teach her child to take responsibility for her own actions, so too does she locate more responsibility with children for themselves. She echoed Sandra's comment about going through a window when she said, "*When I say good-bye to them at the end of the day, I say good-bye to them.*" Yet, as she told me, she continues to care for them as human beings; she continues to care deeply:

I care that the kids maintain their dignity. I care that they learn. I care that they have the desire to learn. . . I care about their self-esteem. . . I care about THEM. (October 24, 1996)

At its heart, this question has been about teacher identity, in relationship to other mothers, in relationship to the self as mother. Men, too, must ask these difficult questions in connection to themselves as father and to other fathers. It is a difficult question because of the tightly woven strands of teaching and mothering; they are often difficult to separate, difficult to identify. Which are teaching actions? Which are mothering actions? Both participants live with the drawing of this line daily. At times it is not drawn at all and simply muddled through. At other times there is a definitive separation. Before, Sandra focused on the academic, curricular aspects of her work. Yet she knew that caring was the key to her success. However, she expressed her caring differently, for example, through the evenings she spent preparing and thinking about her program. Now, she identifies her caring about her students with her mothering identity, she feels she can respond more effectively to the social and emotional needs of the children in her care, and she tries to think long term when acting with care. She cannot spend hours each evening in preparation because of her obligations to her own child. In mothering her child, she has become more aware of what children need. At the same time, she is conscious of a point

Bergum's interpretation of the transformation of woman to mother has been central to my attempt to grasp the changes a teacher experiences. If the woman is deeply transformed through the experience of motherhood, then so must the teacher be. Bergum calls our attention to five important aspects of this transformation to mother, questions that spill over into the life of the teacher.

They are:

What is the nature of the experience of decision?

How is the presence of the child experienced?

What is the nature of separation that leads to integration?

What is the nature of taking on the responsibility of motherhood?

What is the experience of having a child on one's mind? (1989, p. 39-40)

These questions are essential to the experience of becoming a mother.

But they can also be interpreted in light of the transformed teacher. In the first question, Bergum is referring to the experience of the decision to become pregnant. In the life of the teacher, there is the time of decision to go back to teaching. Both Sandra and Nadine struggled with this decision, balancing financial, personal, and professional considerations with the needs of their child. For both, it was an onerous decision not without struggle, and once made, not without guilt. For both participants and for myself, the awareness of the presence of the child during pregnancy trickled into teaching. I recall Nadine's story of how her unborn daughter responded with movement to the sounds of her classroom, once kicking in direct response to a child resting her hand on the belly. (*"The baby kicked me, Mrs. P.!"*) And once born, the presence of the child in these mother's lives became their "over-bearing concern." In exploring the nature of separation that leads to integration, Bergum is talking about the pain and experience of childbirth. As Grumet writes, "the

term 'delivery' must have been created by those who receive the child, not those who release it" (p.10). Bergum explores how this physical separation can lead to a wholeness and integration in the life of the mother. Later, there is a further separation, the separation of the child and the mother who returns to her work life. This time it is her labour in the professional sense, rather than the physical labour of childbirth, which further separates her child from her presence, and requires her to act so that the bonds remain intact. We continue to deliver and release the child, over and over again, in different contexts for the rest of our lives.

The responsibility of motherhood is indeed serious. And the full understanding of this responsibility helps the teacher to recognize the bonds of families in their classrooms. It helps them understand the way parents struggle to maintain decision making control concerning their own child, even in the face of "expert" advice. Taking on the full responsibility for one child may require the teacher to take on the children of the world in a new sense of a caring ethic, may require them "to see the world in a child and the child in the world." And finally, having a child on one's mind is a *changed mind*. Both Sandra and Nadine talked about their need to focus on their classroom children when at school. This represented a struggle to allow their own child to recede. What makes this possible, as Sandra indicated, was the knowledge that her daughter was "well cared for." Doubts as to this make working away from one's child difficult indeed. Having this *changed mind* initiates the woman into a new familial and societal role.

Yet in the effort to ask what we must do, we must not forget that the essential concern must be with what we must be. In real life, however,

being and doing are not separate aspects of living, for one *is* as one *does*. (Bergum, 1989, p. 152)

Grumet's text, Bitter Milk, has also been foundational to this thesis. Her insight and challenges to the woman involved in her own reproductive projects as well as the reproductive projects of society are invaluable. Given the dialogue between the literature, the participants, and myself, Grumet's arguments seem all the more relevant. She gives further insight into the issue of responsibility explored above, contending that we cannot turn away:

What is fundamental is not the nuclear family of an orange juice commercial enjoying a suburban breakfast in the family room. What is fundamental is that although there is no one way of being concerned with children, we cannot deny our responsibility for the future whatever form our projects of nurturance assume. (1988, p.7)

This echoes the concerns my participants expressed about the middle class assumptions that our schooling system makes. Sandra, faced with a very un-middle class socio-economic population, faced a challenge to her values and middle class assumptions daily. Nadine, in the heart of suburbia, often asked how she was helping to perpetuate the status quo. How could her curriculum be transformative? These are hard questions that deserve to be asked, that must be lived out with difficulty daily in the classroom, that perhaps have no easy answer.

Grumet also argues against a simple dichotomy between the public and private worlds, between home and school, female and male ways of being in the world.

I am suggesting that there is a dialectical relation between our domestic experience of nurturing children and our public project to educate the

next generation. It is important to maintain our sense of this dialectic wherein each milieu, the academic and the domestic, influences the character of the other and not to permit the relation to slide into a simplistic one-sided causality. (1988, p.6)

Sandra supports this claim when she reminds us how *"it is difficult to say what influences what, though, because some of what I bring to my mothering I recognize as coming from my back ground in pedagogical theory. . ."* (Response #3, p.6). There is no simple causality, for we teach who we are, and each of us is made up of a myriad of experiences and backgrounds that become facets of our teaching, of which being a mother is one. The idea that we are not abandoning the world of our fathers for that of our mothers, that we are not slipping into the world of the home even as we teach is so important. It is not the rejection of one world for the exclusive initiation of the other. As Pagano writes:

We do not plead for a rejection of the rational or the inferential. Nor do we mean to devalorize the experience of that creature of passion, our brother. Rather, we plead for a conception of art and education that opens the door to other rooms, and larger. . . .Such a conception would not deny difference, nor would it insist on unity. Such a conception would not deny the personal, would not deny the body. It would enable us to bring ourselves to our art and our education, both for ourselves and for others. (1990, p.131)

Opening doors – that is what this conception of curriculum and teacher identity is about – opening up the discourse and opportunities for integrating the lessons learned through mothering, through living our lives, to our teaching,

our classrooms, our communities. Also at issue is the question of caring genuinely, caring by way of truly seeing the child:

The one-caring receives the child and views that child's world through both sets of eyes. Martin Buber calls this relational process "inclusion" (Buber, 1965, pp. 83-103). The one-caring assumes a dual perspective and can see things from both her own pole and that of the cared for. If this were not so, arranging an educational environment for the child would be very difficult. (Noddings, 1992, p.25)

As Wilde points out (1996, p.12), Noddings' perception of the one-caring and the one cared for needs to be expanded into also being able to situate the child in the world. But Noddings' point is well taken, that the one-caring must be able to clearly see the situational nature of each act that is required -- that it *depends*. The struggle that Sandra feels in trying to care adequately for the children in her class, while continuing to be responsible to the curriculum is evident. Nadine's sense of her own "pole," her actual realm of responsibility has become more clear to her. Yet it has not diminished her ability to care, simply focused it.

I learned that the meaning of "good" mother, just as the meaning of "good" teacher, must never be understood as a set of rigid rules. . . . Heidegger's resoluteness is not believing that one has a solution which will hold true over time -- which will not depend on individual circumstances. When resoluteness becomes rigidity it also has the potential to become dangerous. Such rigidity may have the effect of closing down possibilities because the interpretability of life is lost. . . . Heidegger stressed that the certainty of resoluteness must be situational certainty, characterized by an openness and readiness to understand the

next situation differently if the need may arise. The certainty of resoluteness comes from having deeply interpreted a *particular* set of circumstances. (Wilde, 1996, p. 117)

Resoluteness implies a certain strength, the strength to do what is required in order to care in particular circumstances. As Sandra's stories teach us, this is not always easy. To care sometimes requires us to do nothing, and this perhaps is hardest of all.

Jipson's chapter "Teacher-Mother: An Imposition of Identity" (1995) continues to challenge this work. Because this study has focused on women and their experience of becoming mothers, the question inevitably presents itself regarding the *essentialism* this may imply. Is there something essential about being women, mothers – women who teach, mothers who teach? How are we imposing, how are we being imposed on? Is Sandra being impositional when she tries to "fill in the blanks," as she writes? The introduction to the compilation in which Jipson's chapter is found asks if the "imposition of an 'essential' female pedagogy just a reconstruction of patriarchal discourse" (p.14)?

Can we even hope to reach a common metaphor for our relationships with each other and for our work as teachers, or must we learn to link our different stories across what Elizabeth Ellsworth calls our "irreducible differences"? How are we constructed as women teachers and how best can we open ourselves to a critical and feminist pedagogy? I still wonder: What are the impositions inherent in the connected teaching role? . . . How can we acknowledge student voices, with our own, as the source for reconceptualizing our work? And finally I ask: Are the impositions which separate us essential to our roles as teachers? Are

they inescapable realities of which we must constantly be aware? Are we each always both the imposer and the imposed on? (Jipson, 1995, p.34)

These are important questions that need to be asked. They remind me that this project walks a delicate line, balancing the need to express and interpret women's experiences, with the danger that they may be read as essential absolutes and contribute to the patriarchal segregation and devaluation of women based on their gendered experiences. However, I would argue that these experiences that have lead to the teacher being changed by motherhood are perhaps not essential or universal, but familiar -- familiar enough to make the story an important one. It is women who give birth: "To be 'pregnant' with new life is still and only to be a woman whose body and embodied willfulness is the ground and condition of each new and original being who lives" (Ruddick, 1989, p. xiii). And to ignore or downplay the impact of this experience for the mother, and the continued transformative experience of living with the child is to depreciate its value. The experience of giving birth imparts a certain wisdom that expands the woman's being in the world and thus her ability to teach. Not essentialized, but a story that is shared among many.

To have experienced birthing pain offers the possibilities of self-knowledge, knowledge of limitations and capabilities, knowledge of new life as mother, and of a woman's place in the mysterious cycle of human life: birth, death, and rebirth. As women give birth to children, they, in a sense, birth themselves. (Bergum, 1989, p.82)

Second, Jipson's struggle was in trying to position herself as the teacher-mother -- in using the good mother as a metaphor for teaching. As this study has attempted to demonstrate, teaching *through* the mother is not equivalent

with teaching as the mother. So in rejecting the mother-sugar, we are still presented with the potential for teaching sensitively through our understanding as mothers, with allowing our experience of becoming a mother to inform our educative work. Finally, this study does not take a critical, emancipatory stance in its overall thrust, as Jipson does. It intends to interpret: hermeneutically, through lived experiences. And although we must remain sensitive and aware of the issues of power and control and how they function in our lives, our work and our society, I believe that it is in reading our lives deeply and with connection to one another that the freedom to act with care is found. As Smith writes:

Dialogue in the critical sense becomes dialogue with a hidden agenda: I speak *to* you to inform you of your victimization and oppression rather than *with* you in order that together we create a world which does justice to both of us. The interest of the critical tradition is not just persuasion but a predetermination to shape the social order in fixed directions; it requires material evidence of ideas translated into practice. The curricular agenda of the critical has the character of a blueprint operating in the name of justice. Pedagogy is concerned with mobilizing the social conscience of students into acts of naming and eradicating the evils of the times. . . . Both the tradition of consciousness and the critical tradition begin by wanting to get things *right*, which means there will always be a war over whose interpretations can be taken as being so. . . . But Hermes is neither concerned to make a word mean one thing and one thing only, nor is only one preconceived way of doing things the only way. The hermeneutic imagination constantly asks for what is at work in particular ways of speaking and acting in order to facilitate an ever-deepening

appreciation of that wholeness and integrity of the world which must be present for thought and action to be possible at all. (1991, p.196-197)

This is what this study has attempted: not to essentialize, not to prescribe or fix or cure, but to find out what is at work beneath the experience of teaching in the midst of mothering.

Once we have lived through the phenomenon -- sometimes gracefully, at other times with great difficulty, even torment, we must also learn what it means to live *with* it. Once the newness of the changes has settled into routine, once one becomes accustomed to traveling between home and school, private to public, once one has accepted the necessity or choice to place one's own child in the care of another while yourself caring for the children of others, what happens then? How is the phenomenon of teaching through the mother lived with?

Perhaps this is the topic of a whole new research endeavour. Indeed, it was with great interest that I spoke to teachers with nearly grown children, who had lived this transformation years ago. My question was always greeted with a smile; these teachers remembered the milestone of becoming a mother as a benchmark in their teaching. The change seemed to endure, but there was a grace, a settling, a comfortable space where the transformation was no longer wrenching. There is a sense of first living through the phenomenon, then living with it. I find myself wondering what the future will bring for the participants in this study. How will Sandra's experience continue to develop throughout the year? Nadine, now mother to twin boys as well as her toddling daughter, is struggling with the question of what place her role as teacher will now fit into her life.

The specificity of these women's experiences begs a question of the universality of the interpretations of this project. Of course, interpretive work does not pretend to achieve statistical generalizability. And although these teacher's stories are unique in their details, they are like other stories. They could be the stories of others -- my stories, your stories. There are resemblances between stories and among them, commonalities and resonances with the literature that continue to convince me that the story told is an important one to be shared. Not simply to be shared with those who have experienced the phenomenon, but all who are interested in our relationships and responsibilities to young children placed within our circles of care.

As is so often the case, living this question has changed the researcher. Interpreting my experience in becoming a mother, once, and now again to my second daughter, has made this part of my life more readable, which otherwise was a blur of feeding, changing, washing, and raising. But more, it has given me a sense of where the path leads in terms of returning to educative tasks, in terms of caring for the children of other mothers. It has reinvested my sense of teaching as a significant role in contributing to the world: its children, its future. My participants and the others who have contributed to this work, along with the writers whose thoughts have guided and challenged me across space and time, have all taught me so much. Living with a question such as this has made the world more interpretable.

As a child, I am born into a world that "seems" complete. But I learn the language of my community only to find holes and difficulties which point to the limits of our collective understanding. Those borders and boundaries which serve to secure our life together and give us an identity are permeable. As Paulo Freire (1971) has put it, reality is always

"hinged." Reality is always reality-for-us but it always opens out into a broader world which serves or can serve to enrich our understanding of who we are. (Smith, 1991, p.197)

As is the nature of research, each question leads to further questions. I am left with many possible avenues for inquiry that would be worth exploring. Among them, how does this phenomenon evolve over time, when the mother is no longer a "new" mother, when the demands of her children are not so pressing? Are the internal processes of this transformation discernible in the classrooms of women who have become mothers? What of fathers who teach, of their transformations? What is the experience of children whose mothers are teachers? Finally, and perhaps most pressingly, is a question about how we can transform schools to open up their ability to support caring pedagogy that has, at its heart, the long term interests of each child at stake, a more maternal caring.

It is difficult to end, because ending implies a finality: conclusions drawn, questions answered, quest completed. As Bergum expressed:

I acknowledge that in many ways the question. . . is still present. But it can be said that all questions of this nature are, in reality, ongoing. The intimate relationship that exists between questioning and understanding, between showing and hiding, is what gives the hermeneutic experience its true dimension (Gadamer, 1975) and makes the project of uncovering the meaning of something difficult . . . questions demonstrate the open-endedness, the on-goingness of this research. So, in a sense, it *is* not finished. Indeed, it *cannot* be finished. (1989, p.151)

Yet there is a place where the spinning out of interpretations must stop, at least for the time being (Jardine, 1993, p.10). In closing, I would like to allow

one of the participants of this study to have the last word, as she wrote about the nature of teaching in the midst of mothering, telling of how she perceives "*how motherhood breathes life into teaching*" (Response #4, p. 2) This is the gift which becoming a mother potentially brings to the teacher. If it is the teacher who has room for both her own child and the children of the Other in her heart, in her life, in her work, then it is she who travels back and forth, between the productive and the reproductive, public and private -- bridging the gap, living within it, weaving these tasks and these worlds together, working to allow each to inform the other. She is teaching the children of others in the midst of mothering her own. As she brings her child into the world, she is caring for that world through all of its children.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH LOG

Nadine

Letter #1 to Nadine (pp. 1-2) August 19, 1996

Response #1 (p. 1) September 22, 1996

Letter #2 to Nadine (pp. 1-2) September 25, 1996

Response #2 (pp. 1-3) October 6, 1996

Letter #3 to Nadine (pp. 1-3) October 12, 1996

Response #3 (pp. 1-2) October 23, 1996

Taped Dialogue (one hour, fifteen minutes). October 24, 1996

Sandra

Letter #1 to Sandra (pp. 1-2) August 11, 1996

Response #1 (pp. 1-8) August 22, 1996

Letter #2 to Sandra (pp. 1-2) September 3, 1996

Response #2 (pp. 1-9) September 12, 1996

Letter #3 to Sandra (pp. 1-4) September 15, 1996

Response #3 (pp. 1-8) October 2, 1996

Letter #4 to Sandra (pp. 1-4) October 5, 1996

Response #4 (pp. 1-4) October 24, 1996

Taped Dialogue (one hour) October 25, 1996

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRY

Sandra, Response #4

Last week another mother/teacher made a comment to me that "ruffled my feathers." She graduated with me in '89 and she worked for the Board as a substitute. We have kept in touch so she knows what I was like as a teacher prior to Chelsea. Anyway, she asked how school was going and I told her that teaching was certainly different -- I choose my activities and utilize my time differently, now. Her comment back to me was that, "So, you're not the outstanding teacher you once were." Well, I resisted the urge to clarify her conception but I immediately thought to myself, "How interesting that the perception is that now that I have a family my teaching will be less effective -- exactly what I had been concerned about earlier in September. I think now that even though I, physically, put less time into my teaching the quality is better because my view of children, parents, the role and place of education have all been adjusted. I now see children more "holistically" and I think I have a better understanding of the complexities of children and particularly their behaviours. In my high needs classroom I think I would have been much more frustrated before because I would not have understood and, therefore, not have sympathized with these children who are, in many cases, innocent victims of their mothering. I can teach these children more patiently and perhaps more empathetically because I understand that many of their inappropriate behaviours are not their fault -- they are modeling behaviours from home.

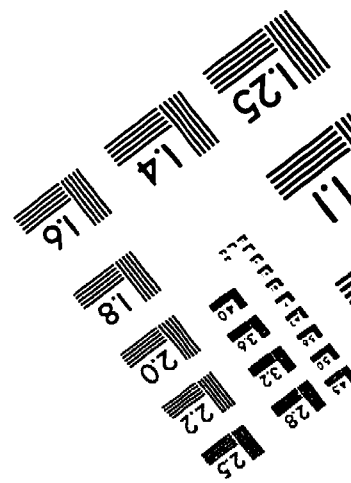
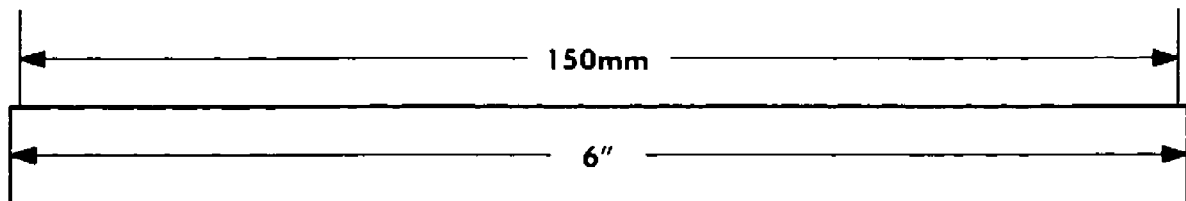
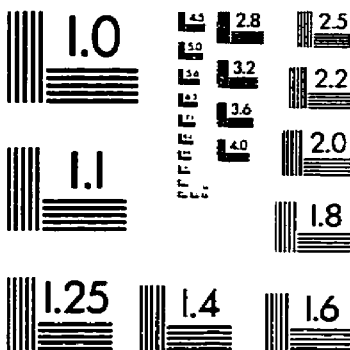
The comment from my teacher/mother friend offended me because I guess I want to correct the perception that mothers cannot be as effective teachers -- to correct the perception I myself held for many years. The fact that she is both teacher and mother caused me even more concern. However, I don't think she is the reflective type, and may never have considered how motherhood breathes life into teaching. Being a mother adds an astute viewing dimension to teaching, because one views children from the other side of the teacher-student-parent triangle.

The Saddest Day

I have never cried as much in my classroom as I have this week. On Monday morning I was on supervision when little Jessica, my grade five student, came to me and said, "My mother went to the bank yesterday and never came home -- and even if there was a really long line up, it still should not have taken her all night to come home." The tragic innocence and perceptivity of this came to full realization on Wednesday when her grandmother was summoned from Edmonton to reestablish custody of Jessica and her seven year old brother. *Her mother never came home.* When little Jessica came to school on Wednesday with her grandmother and told me that she was leaving for Edmonton, I was heartbroken. Jessica is an absolutely delightful girl who has suffered much at the hands of her drug-addicted mother. The thought of this little girl all alone for three nights and three days just broke my heart. I kept asking "How could a mother have done that?" I said good-bye to Jessica that afternoon in our classroom and my students stopped and listened silently as I fought back the tears. They don't understand just why "the teacher is crying" but most of them know Jessica had been left alone. This didn't seem to phase

them. I could not help but feel tremendous sadness for this little girl who does not deserve this horrendous treatment. I felt like bringing my class together and talking about Jessica's situation. I think I wanted them to go home and be thankful that their mother hasn't abandoned them. I decided not to -- out of respect for Jessica's privacy. But, the sadness remains, and I think about Jessica often. How will this affect her, now, in a few years, as a mother herself. I just cannot understand how a mother could have done that. In my somber, teary state, I went to the office after school Wednesday, and asked another mother, "How could a mother have done that?" I just cannot understand this. How mentally unstable or chemically imbalanced does a mother have to be to just not come home to her children? I have not been this emotionally affected by a student in my life. And I think as a mother now, this week's event has saddened me much more intensely.

TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

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