

The Practical and Theoretical Challenges of Mothering with Disabilities: A Feminist Standpoint Analysis *

Maeve M. O'Donovan, Notre Dame of Maryland University, modonovan@ndm.edu

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Through a careful reading of the lived experience of mothering with disabilities, I argue that ignorances, both harmful and epistemically rich, about mothering with disability are produced, along with knowledges, as a result of the interface of motherhood scholarship and feminist disability theory. The mechanisms of production, and rectification of, such ignorances call for philosophical analysis. Using feminist standpoint theory and agnotology I describe how such ignorance is produced, why it is problematic, and how philosophers can work to overcome it.

Terminology:

1. **Mothering with disability:** the lived experience of mothering as undertaken by the following groups: mothers with disabilities, mothers with children with disabilities, mothers with disabilities with children with disabilities
2. **Disabled persons and Persons with disabilities:** There is considerable debate over the language used to describe persons labeled disabled. The phrasing “persons with disabilities” is criticized by disability activists for implying both that the person has a problem and that disabilities are real objects that exist outside of social contexts. Feminists and some disability theorists continue to use the “with disability” phrasing, however, in part because it is read by those not familiar with disability activism as less pejorative than ‘disabled person.’
3. **Medical Model and Social Model of Disability:** *Medical Model* is more common in the U.S.A. & sees disabilities as deficiencies in individual persons, *Social Model* is more common in Britain & sees disabilities as socially constructed

Disciplinary Contexts:

1. **Feminist theory**
2. **Disability Studies:** originated in Britain (open access, *Disability Studies Quarterly*: <http://disstudies.org/dsq/>)
3. **Feminist Disability Studies:** a body of work at the intersection of the above two disciplines (see <http://disabilitystudies.syr.edu/resources/feministdisabilitystudies.aspx>)
4. **Motherhood scholarship:** Adrienne Rich is often described as the mother of the field (see: Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Activism: <http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/>)
5. **Agnotology:** an emerging field studying the generation, kinds of, and means of undoing (when possible) ignorance (see *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance*, eds. R. Proctor and L. Schiebinger (Stanford UP, 2008))

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Outline:

Part I: Cultural Ignorance and Gaps in Existing Research

- A. Cultural Ignorance
- B. Feminist theory
- C. Disability studies
- D. Feminist disability studies
- E. Motherhood scholarship

Part II: Mothering with ADHD

- A. Agnotology
- B. Works by those mothering with ADHD
 - a. Under-diagnosis and sexism
 - b. Best practices and male bias
 - c. Disordered eating and mother-blame
 - d. Good wives, good mothers
 - e. Poverty and disablement – welfare reform & ADHD

Part III: Advantages and Unique Knowledges

- A. FST as resource
- B. Agnotological analysis—who knows not? Why not? Where is there ignorance? Why?
- C. Advantages of mothering with disability

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