

# M/othering a Bodied Curriculum

## Sleeping with Cake and Other Touchable Encounters

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### Introduction

**A** BODIED CURRICULUM attends to the relational, social, and ethical implications of “being-with” other bodies differently and to the different knowledges such bodily encounters produce (Springgay & Freedman, 2007). It is a practice of being oriented to others, to touch, to reflect, and to dwell with others relationally. In this paper we re-conceptualize m/othering as a bodied curriculum opening up maternity to the in-between of corporeality, materiality, and difference. By its exposure to intimacy and vulnerability, m/othering, like a bodied curriculum premised on being-with, enables selves and others to experience a collision, a bursting into being, that shifts the perception of embodiment as universal towards an understanding of bodied subjectivity and knowledge as difference.

While much of Western thought has celebrated the splitting of women’s identity into “mother” or “other”—the perception that women cannot be both—re-thinking mothering from the perspective of “performativity” recognizes the relationality between mother and other (Springgay, 2007). As Emily Jeremiah (2006) writes, “To understand mothering as performative is to conceive of it as an active practice—a notion that is already progressive, given the traditional Western understanding of the mother as passive” (p. 21). In doing so, we shift our attention from motherhood as biological, selfless, and existing prior to culture to a practice that is always incomplete, indeterminable, and vulnerable. A relational understanding of m/othering opens up the possibility of an ethical form of exchange between self and other and “allows us to understand the maternal subject as engaged in a relational process which is never complete and which demands reiteration” (Jeremiah, 2006, p. 28). Mothering as performance “contain[s] the potential for a disruption of dominant discourses on maternity” (p. 25) and thereby makes room for maternal agency. This re-conceptualization of m/othering refuses to be split, while also remaining ambivalent.

Our interest in mothering is born of two inter-related elements. The first being our own lived experiences as new mothers. These often anxiety ridden, immanently hilarious, and sometimes grotesque experiences of mothering are marked by vulnerability, intimacy, and incompleteness—all aspects of relational knowing. It is this relationality, characterized by the sense touch, which is the second element that calls us to write about and re-conceptualize curriculum as m/othering. In an effort to “make present” this relational knowing, we turn to the work of contemporary visual artist Diane Borsato. Borsato’s work explores everyday activities and materials through the body—of paying attention to the absurdities, ambivalence, and unthought encounters that exist between bodies.

In the first section of our paper, we focus on two of Borsato’s (2001) intimate performances “Touching 1000 People” and “Sleeping with Cake” in order to develop the theoretical constructs of “touch” and “being-with.” From here, we extend such understandings of relationality to a bodied curriculum and in particular attend to the ethical implications of teaching and learning “with” others. In our third and concluding section, we return to earlier deliberations on mothering as performative and suggest that a (post) re-conceptualization<sup>1</sup> of curriculum requires an openness to the un/thought and a process of becoming that is always incomplete.

### Touching 1000 People and Sleeping with Cake

Imagine walking down the street of a large urban city. How do you encounter and face the stranger? How do you hold your body? How do you materialize and mark your space? For most of us, the authors included, we are inclined to embark on the dance of avoidance—the refusal of contact, touch, or conscious encounter. We side step and we walk around—marking our territory an uncomplicated space. But imagine walking down a busy street and suddenly a hand reaches out to caress your shoulder. Or envision yourself reaching for a plump juicy red apple and finding your fingers slightly intertwined with those of another. Picture yourself accepting change at the checkout counter and being gently fondled by a thumb and forefinger or sitting on a crowded public bus and feeling your shins being softly nuzzled by the sole of an athletic shoe. Having come across research that suggested that touching people in a seemingly unconscious manner could possibly affect their well being, artist Diane Borsato subtly came in contact with 1000 perfect strangers. Whether it was simply grazing someone’s hand or lightly caressing an arm, Borsato sought to change the well-being of the city, improving its mood (and her own) through touch (Borsato, 2001). As an exercise in “diligently counting—463, 464, 465”—Borsato’s performative piece became an exercise in “paying attention” (Borsato, 2001, p. 65). Moreover, her absurd task renders meaningful the nonvisible sense—touch—as a way of knowing and encountering self and other.

Western thought has always privileged vision as the dominant sense equating it with light, consciousness, and rationalization (Vasseleu, 1998). The other senses, marked by the body’s effluence, were understood as interior sensibilities and thus of lesser value (Classen, 1993). In fact the nonvisible senses such as touch, taste, and smell were characterized as emotive senses and therefore gendered female and/or culturally dark, vulgar, and deviant. For instance the differences between the following two turns of phrase signify the ways in which Western thought has constructed knowledge as separate from and in opposition to the body. “I see” has commonly meant I know or understand, while “I feel” is often associated with intuitive knowing, which has historically been condemned as ridiculous and dismissed as trivial.

While vision is premised on the separation of the subject and object, creating a rational autonomous subject, as a contact sense, touch offers contiguous access to an object. Touch alters the ways in which we perceive objects, providing access to depth and surface, inside and outside. Touch as a way of knowing can be understood through two modalities. First, touch is the physical contact of skin on matter. The second modality is a sense of being in a proximal relation with something. In visual culture this has often been addressed as synaesthesia. Synaesthesia refers to the blurring of boundaries between the senses so that in certain circumstances one might be able to say I can taste a painted image. A further understanding of proximity has been taken up by corporeal phenomenologists (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, 1968) and feminist scholars (e.g., Ahmed & Stacey, 2001; Grosz, 1994) who argue that knowledge is produced through bodied encounters, which can be interchangeable with the terms: inter-embodiment or intercorporeality (Weiss, 1999).

Inter-embodiment, an approach explored by feminist scholar Gail Weiss (1999) emphasizes “that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and non-human bodies” (p. 5). Inter-embodiment poses that the construction of the body and the production of body knowledge is not created within a single, autonomous subject (body) but rather that body knowledge and bodies are created in the intermingling and encounters between bodies. Accordingly, Madeline Grumet (1988) writes that:

Trapped in the dualisms of individualism and idealism, we become convinced that whatever we see in our “mind’s eye” is a private vision, split off from what others know and feel, split off from the synesthesia that integrates all our perceptions, split off from the body, the other, the world. (p. 129)

Rather, intersubjectivity, she argues is characterized as a sharing between self and others. Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) concurs arguing that a relational learning experience “acknowledges that to be alive and to inhabit a body is to be continuously and radically in relation with the world, with others, and with what we make of them” (p. 4). How we come to know ourselves and the world around us, our subjectivity, is performed, constructed, and mediated in relation with other beings. It is this relationality that is crucial. Rather than knowledge formed through the rational autonomous I, knowledge is the body’s immersion, its intertwining and interaction in the world and between others (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). However, as feminist scholars have noted, embodiment (from a Merleau-Pontian perspective) ignores the specificity of gender, sexuality, etc. (Stawarska, 2006). Embodiment universalizes the body on the basis of the standard male norm. Likewise, as Beata Stawarska (2006) claims, Merleau-Ponty’s theories of intersubjectivity erase the particularities of difference lived and encountered with, in, and through different bodies. To that extent, our interest in touch and relationality resides in the notion that we are always “with” others, not to consume or assimilate one another’s experience and subjectivity, but that in the event of the “with,” difference, and thus, thought is produced. This understanding of with as difference, we argue, involves a reconceptualization of the body—embodiment—in terms of the concepts touch and spac(e)ing.

When we touch something we connect with it, we encounter it in an intimate way. While intimacy can be understood as “knowing someone in depth, knowing many different aspects of a person or knowing how they would respond in different situations,”<sup>2</sup> we want to think about intimacy through Jean Luc Nancy’s (2000) notion of being-with. To be a body is to be “with”

other bodies, to touch, to encounter, and to be exposed. As such, intimacy is not simply about the possibility or impossibility of ever knowing the other fully or deeply but rather names the meetings and encounters between bodies (Ahmed, 2000). Bodied encounters, we argue, in and through touch, produce intercorporeal understandings and in doing so imagine an intimate curriculum premised on difference.

For Borsato (2001), the intimacy of “Touching 1000 People” altered the way she moved through the city. She writes,

I started to feel much closer to familiar cashiers, and I think I felt compelled to smile more at strangers around me, and at service people in general. I found myself feeling responsible to ‘touch,’ in even a small emotional way, grumpy taxi drivers, indifferent waiters, and anyone else who seemed to need such touches....As I moved through the city throughout the month—counting, negotiating the streets with my palms as eyes—I even started noticing all the dogs that needed comforting as the waited anxiously outside of shops. (p. 65)

As a result of touching, Borsato and the strangers she encountered began to unravel an unthought experience. Through the act of touching (both literally and in terms of proximal relationships), the subject is able to make sense of something and simultaneously make sense of themselves. To make sense of something, to know it, to create it, is to come into contact with it, to touch it, and thereby produce a body (Perpich, 2005). In other words, in the moment of encounter—touch—self and other emerge, not as already pre-determined subjects/objects but as subjects in the making.

While Borsato, and the research she drew upon, suggested that physical touching would alter people’s moods in a positive way, Borsato (2001) also observed that different individuals reacted differently to acts of being touched. She writes,

I also began to recognize the differences in people’s feelings of entitlements to space and how it related to what I perceived to be their age, cultural background, gender, and class. For example, it seemed much harder to touch teens than older adults, much harder to touch finely dressed women than men, much easier to touch very old people, etc. Site also mattered. For example, it was much easier to touch people in the supermarket than in a fancy department store or a museum. (p. 65)

Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed (2000) makes sense of these individualized reactions by suggesting that the concept of who is a stranger needs to be challenged. It is commonly believed that a stranger is “any-body” we do not know. Rather, Ahmed (2000) contends, a “stranger is *somebody* whom we have *already recognized* in the very moment in which they are ‘seen’ or ‘faced’ as a stranger...we recognize somebody *as a stranger*, rather than simply failing to recognize them” (p. 21). A stranger is some-body we recognize as “strange,” or as Ahmed (2000) implies, “it is a figure that is painfully familiar in that very strange(r)ness” (p. 21). Strangers are recognized as not belonging, as being out of place. In order to recognize some-body as strange(r), there needs to be closeness, proximity—a touching encounter. Likewise, in order to recognize some-body (or for that matter some-thing) as out of place, there needs to be a demarcation and enforcement of boundaries and of space. It is the “coming too close”—the bodied encounters which produce a body (the stranger) in the moment of exchange and thereby bring into being

knowledge of self and other, and the other's otherness (Ahmed, 2000). The subject, writes Ahmed (2000), "is not, then, simply differentiated from (its) other, but comes into being by learning how to differentiate between others" (p. 24). Put another way, the Westernized autonomous individual is no longer the central axis upon which all else is judged; rather, selves and others simultaneously become differentiated. Thus, bodied encounters *as* difference dislocate fixed boundaries and involve *spatial* negotiations between bodies.

### Spac(e)-ing

Like vision and touch, our dominant understanding of space is Cartesian. Space is an empty place marker into which things are placed and encountered. For instance, most individuals would think of the body (which is an object) as being in space (a void) rather than constituting space itself. Post-Cartesian views about the ontological status of space include substantialism and relationalism. Substantialism claims that the world consists of material objects and a further entity called space. Space is no longer empty but a separate object in and of itself. Thus, space can be observed as a discrete unit in the same way that one might be able to observe objects. Relationalism denies this objective existence of space and argues that objects are related to each other by spatial relations. Accordingly, space does not exist as such but rather in terms of spatial relations and patterns (James, 2006). Nancy's (2000) "being-with" emerges as an affirmation of relationalism but also as a radical critique in terms of the relation between the experience of space and of embodiment. In a similar way, Gilles Deleuze's thinking on space (see James, 2006) exists as a passage, a network of movements (to), and force. While Nancy develops the concept of the body (or what he calls *sense*) as an element of spacing, Deleuze theorizes the interval or the in-between. Both, for the sake of our arguments, assist us in thinking of bodied encounters *as* difference, a position that enables us to examine a (post) re-conceptualization of curriculum as bodied. In what follows, we develop a relational understanding of space in order to establish a conceptual framework for thinking of inter-embodiment outside of universalizing structures.

In binary thought we think of opposing terms, for instance mind and body, self and other, or light and dark. Likewise, as Irigaray (1993) claims, the use of one term as the neutral or universal term to define both is the basis of western language and culture. For instance there is not simply the term "mind" and another independent term "body," but rather there is only one term, "the other being defined as what it is not, its other or opposite" (Grosz, 2001, p. 94). Irigaray's claim is that the one term, and in this example—the body—is erased and that the body emerges only as supplement or complement to the privileged other term—the mind. The supplementary term is the one that must be overcome, transcended, or refused. Similarly, the Other does not exist separate from or independent of the self but is always defined in relation to the sovereign subject.

However, when we speak of the in-between, in a Deleuzian sense, it is not a physical place bounded by fixed entities (i.e., mind and body). Rather, it is a space of movement, of development, and of becoming. The in-between, according to Grosz (2001), "is that which is not a space, a space without boundaries of its own" (p. 91). The in-between does not negate either term (i.e., mind and body) but resists the privileging of one to the other. In our example of mind and body then, the body comes into being not as a supplement to, or reliant on the mind, but under its own terms, its own force, movement, and assemblage. The in-between, claims Grosz (2001), "is what

fosters and enables the other's transition from being the other of the one to its own becoming, to reconstituting another relation, in different terms" (p. 94).

The in-between pervades the writings of many contemporary philosophers under various terms including: *différence*, repetition, iteration, liminality, the interval etc. The in-between is a

space in which things are undone, the space to the side and around, which is the space of subversion and fraying, the edges of any identity's limits. In short, it is the space of the bounding and undoing of the identities which constitute it. (Grosz, 2001, p. 93)

It is a space of juxtaposition and re-alignment that opens bodies and thought to new arrangements and possibilities.

This may be why the middle, according to Deleuze, is the best point from which to begin, where thought unravels itself.

The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25)

Contrary to dichotomous relations, in the middle something passes between two terms such that they are both modified putting them to strange new uses. To be in-between is to become, and "becoming is bodily thought" (Grosz, 2001, p. 70). The in-between is where "thought, force, or change, invests and invents new series, metamorphosizing new bodies from the old through their encounter" (Grosz, 2001, p. 70). Thus, the in-between becomes an unhinging of expectation and sequence, not to replace them with their opposites but with re-ordering of something new altogether. Thus, the in-between is entirely spatial and temporal. Grosz (2001) suggests that space be reconfigured as indeterminate, unfolding, serial, multiplying, complex, heterogeneous, and as an opening up to other spaces. This reconfiguring, she argues, requires a thinking of the materiality of space—shifting our understanding of it in terms of proximity and entwinement.

While Deleuzian theories position space as the in-between, Nancy's (2000) use of the term "being-with" seeks to think of embodiment in terms of the concepts of touch and spacing. The term space, for Nancy, should be understood as being constituted in meaning. Being (for instance the self) does not exist prior to knowledge and meaning, but being comes into existence through the act of creating meaning and knowledge. Nancy's re-conceptualization of space leads him to formulate a materialist or a bodily ontology (James, 2006). In this sense, space cannot be thought of as a separate entity; rather, the experience of space unfolds as a spatial-temporal event between bodies, which is understood as open and ecstatic. Bodies/things, Nancy argues, exist through a spacing—a spacing of space. In doing so, Nancy contends that space be thought of as "an opening or exteriority which never closes or folds onto itself" (James, 2006, p. 104). This spacing or the in-between is intangible and ungraspable in the sense that it is not an "object" or something that we can "see" with our eyes and thus point to and say "hey I found the in-between sitting over here." Spacing exists in the relationships between bodies/things.

Spacing is crucial to thinking about embodiment in terms of touch-ing. For instance, we often think of touch as a physical contact of skin on matter, but spacing allows us to conceive of touch as intangible, as something in a proximal relationship with something else. Spacing does not

imply a measure of distance (i.e., one meter or 500 miles); rather, spacing constitutes the very place where things happen between bodies/things. Thus, touching as a way of knowing implies that I can know the other without fixing her or reducing her to an object.

It captures the tension between the need to intangibly touch the other, while maintaining a respectful distance from her. The intangible touch is not one that does violence to the other by violating her corporeal boundaries; rather, it is a reciprocal touch that gives me access to the other's limit, the borders of her body. To touch the other is to interrupt a logic that attempts to know the other by subsuming her into categories of the same, a logic that attempts to fix the other, confer an identity on her, an identity that renders her body either meaningful or worthless. To touch the other, in both a tangible and intangible sense, is to gain access to her specificity, to be exposed to it, to be affected by it and to respond to it, but not to subsume it or annihilate it. (Soriat, 2004, pp. 220–221)

In this way, touch creates a space where difference emerges not as “something different from” but as difference itself. This understanding of difference, we argue, is enacted in Borsato's visceral experiment titled “Sleeping with Cake.”

In this private performance Borsato (2001) filled up her bed with “about 10 cakes—a few chocolate cakes, cherry cakes, vanilla cakes, lemon cakes and a flan—and slept surrounded by them for an entire night” (p. 63). Seeking comfort from presence and touch it was not the taste of each different cake that made itself present but the materiality of the cake—how it felt next to her in bed.

Even while I was sleeping I was tremendously aware of the cakes all around me. I was shocked to appreciate how dense a cake really is (especially my homemade cakes, it seems). All these points of pressure on the bed around me made it feel like I was sleeping with 10 cats. I could smell the intense sugar of them all night long, and being surrounded by such lusciousness was even somewhat erotic, something I had predicted I wouldn't experience on account of the sticky crumbs and frosting. (p. 63)

It wasn't that Borsato came to know the objects in her bed as “chocolate cake” or “strawberry frosting” but as events that presented themselves in-between, or in the spacing between her body and the bodies of the sweet cakes. For Borsato, what became known was the intimacy of the encounter, and with/in this intimacy she was propelled to recognize the relationality between bodies/things. This relationality, we argue, is where knowledge is created, mediated, and ruptured, presenting itself for future relational events. In-between or through spac(e)ing a bodied curriculum emerges.

## A Bodied Curriculum

Bodies have been accorded a central place in postmodern scholarship, and in particular, the inclusion of embodiment in curriculum studies has become a cogent location of inquiry. Understanding curriculum as *bodied* ruptures and displaces the rigid boundaries of dualism and power. Engaging with all of the senses and in particular the experience of touch, a bodied curriculum materializes through the interactions between bodies. Curriculum, writes Susan Stinson, “exists

only as it comes through persons” (cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995/2002, p. 567). Accordingly, curriculum scholar Ted T. Aoki (see Pinar & Irwin, 2005) reminds us that in traditional curricular spaces, fraught with standards, testing, and the corporatization of education, students become faceless, whereas in the embodied lived curriculum “teachers and students are face to face” (p. 212). Using the term “live(d) curriculum,” Aoki folds the past, present, and ongoing experiences together in the situated image of the curricular landscape. Likewise, Bill Pinar and Madeleine Grumet’s (see Pinar et al., 1995/2002) concept of *currere* marks an understanding of curriculum through the everyday. *Currere*, argues Pinar (2004), provides students and teachers with an embodied understanding of the interrelations between knowledge, life experiences, and social reconstruction. *Currere*, like its counterpart self-reflexivity “is an intensified engagement with daily life” (Pinar, 2004, p. 37), in which conceptions of self-knowledge are always understood in relation to others. Resonating with Megan Boler’s (1999) claims, Pinar reminds us that self-understanding must be embedded with engaged pedagogical action, where the self and other become interconnected in the social reconstruction of knowledge, experience, and public life. In other words, curriculum understood as *currere* is an embodied awareness between inside and outside and amongst bodies. Extending Aoki and Pinar’s notions of curriculum as lived experience, we propose a (post) re-conceptualization of curriculum as a *bodied curriculum* where the relationality between self and other performs curriculum as difference.

Many of Borsato’s performances exemplify this notion of a curriculum of the everyday. Enacted on busy urban streets, in the privacy of her own bedroom, or in the homes and restaurants inhabited by others, Borsato engages with others in unusual and purposeful ways. Assigning herself the task to cook alongside each of her Aunts, Borsato’s performance, “Cooking with Zias” shifts the attention from “learning to cook” a prescriptive curriculum based on recipes, organized procedures, and particular ingredients, towards a bodied curriculum situated in the everyday, where bodied encounters become the performance. Although a passion for food brought the women together, it was the relationality of bonding, of conversation, and of the incompleteness of the event that constitutes it as a bodied curriculum. Borsato (2001) explains this, “I spent seven different afternoons talking about food, culture, the generation gap, women’s roles, sex, love, art, and family gossip” (p. 62). Sometimes, Borsato notes, the encounters with her aunts, many of whom she had never spent time with before, were awkward and filled with the weighty presence of uncertainty and partiality.

This calls to mind the work of Maxine Greene (1973) who encourages educators to conceptualize curriculum through a “stranger’s vantage point on everyday reality” (p. 267), to search for the unknown and the unfamiliar not to reveal or expose such details but rather to see what “other possibilities” being in unfamiliar spaces evoke. Maxine Greene, Madeleine Grumet, and Janet Miller are among the many curriculum scholars who work to understand how encounters with the arts could open curriculum spaces. While our efforts to re-conceptualize a bodied curriculum are indebted to their work, and to those scholars who have theorized curriculum as an “aesthetic text”, our aim is not to (only) think about how works of art destabilize our assumptions providing us with transformative, creative, and unfamiliar possibilities of teaching and learning, rather, our interest lies in examining the encounters that exist between bodies and thereby produces particular body-subjects. Thus, it isn’t so much that Borsato’s work is an unusual form of art, or that witnessing her work, which we might add is almost an impossibility because of their intimate and private nature, might provoke unfamiliar or taken for granted responses, rather the moment of unfamiliarity that is generated through her work, is the impossibility of ever completely knowing self and other.

Discussing the role of autobiography in curriculum work, Janet Miller (2005) calls attention to the ways that language shapes and re-shapes one's "self" and to the ways that language is constituted in power. She notes that many teacher education programs invite teachers to construct autobiographical tracings of themselves as teachers. But these stories, she argues, are insufficient evidence of teaching because they are crafted in such a way as to appear seamless or "spun of whole cloth" (p. 51).

Such "teacher stories" often offer unproblematized recountings of what is taken to be the transparent, linear, and authoritative "reality" of those teachers' "experiences." And their "teacher identities" in these stories often are crafted as unitary, fully conscious, universal, complete and non-contradictory. (p. 51)

Miller observes, these stories reify the autonomous "I" of Cartesian dualism, separate from not only the teachers' material body, but the body-subjects of others embedded within such stories, or the bodied encounters—the relationality—such tellings produce. A bodied curriculum approaches the notion of "experience" as socially and discursively produced and recognizes that interpretation and representation are always incomplete. In this way, it is not the performative gestures of cooking and sharing interpersonal stories with her aunts that exists as meaningful; rather, it is the relationality—the touching encounters—that "take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to" (Behar, 1996 quoted in Miller, 2005, p. 54) that generate the site of meaning making and thus, curriculum in action. Extending Miller's (2005) argument that educators need to recognize that the telling of stories needs to be understood as "site(s) of permanent openness and resignifiability" (p. 54), we insist that such tellings exist as intercorporeal encounters, where self and other emerge "with" one another, where the "with" constitutes embodiment as difference.

In another of Borsato's touching experiments, she assembled sentimental objects such as her steel-toed boots and a worn copy of her favorite book *A Natural History of the Senses* and boiled each of them for many hours to see if she could distill their sentimental essence. However, after hours of boiling the objects, much like one would make broth, Borsato discovered that she was unable to "boil out sentiment like a flavour for a soup" (Borsato, 2001, p. 63). Each object's meaning was not something that could be abstracted or removed; rather, its meaning was lived and embodied within its materiality. Meaning "was in the presence of the objects themselves, in their existence as whole, unique, touchable, heavy things" (Borsato, 2001, p. 63). Boiling and making broth of her objects, Borsato was unable to know her objects more—she may have discovered their particular odors or how long each object took to distill, but she was unable to know the other fully or completely. However, while Borsato was unable to extract the sentiment from each object, her performative gestures propelled her to experience a mode of being together with her objects that exceeded the boundaries of the experiment. By staging these bodied encounters, unthought of possibilities will break through the conventions of daily interactions and involve self and other in transformative experiences. This, suggests Zygmunt Bauman (1993), is a mode of relationality not governed by rules and expectations but an encounter that demands an attentiveness to alterity, to the uniqueness of the Other. Building on Bauman's work, educational philosopher Sharon Todd (2003) writes that such encounters are "a togetherness born out of the immediacy of interaction, a communicative gesture that does not have as its end anything except its own communicativeness, its own response" (p. 48).

As such, Borsato's intimate and touching gestures "offer insight into how the surprising and unpredictable forms of relationality that arise in the immediacy of an encounter with difference carry profound relevance for ethical interaction" (Todd, 2003, p. 4). Left with smelly broth, much like the sticky remainders of "Sleeping with Cake," we are confronted an "ethics of embodiment" (see La Jevic & Springgay, 2008, Springgay, 2008; Watt, 2007). An ethics of embodiment, shifts how "we as teachers, students, and teacher-educators perceive our 'selves' and others' 'selves' so that we do not simply incorporate or appropriate 'others' and their stories into the ones we already and always have been telling about ourselves or 'them'" (Miller, 2005, p. 229). Being-with compels us to examine and take responsibility for the meanings we make, "understanding all the while that the meanings and categories by which we typically comprehend and live our daily existence can be altered" (Miller, 2005, p. 229). Embodiment as difference underscores the importance of learning to live "with" others, touching not to consume or inhale, but opening up to particularities and possibilities of what each may become.

### M/othering and an Ethics of Embodiment

As a way of bringing to a close this paper, we want to return to the concept of m/other presented in the introduction. Our use of the m/other metaphor for re-conceptualizing a bodied curriculum is important if we are to conceive of a curriculum that leaves open the possibilities of ethical interactions between self and other. In understanding the term "ethics" we draw on feminist cultural theorist Sara Ahmed (2000) who argues that ethics is distinct from morality, where morality is a set of codes and behaviors. "Ethics," she offers "is instead a question of how one encounters others *as* other (than being) and, in this specific sense, how one can live with what cannot be measured by the regulative force of morality" (p. 138). When education takes up the project of ethics as morality, it is interested in particular principles that govern bodies such as regulations, laws, or guidelines (Todd, 2003). In this instance, ethics as a moral curriculum is designed to assist students in learning how to live and act. It is made into concrete practices, duties, and systems of oppression. Ethics becomes a particular acquisition of knowledge that is rationalist in its features.

In contrast, Sharon Todd (2003) suggests that an ethics understood through social interaction, and where knowledge is not seen as absolute, gives importance to the complexities of the ethical and bodied encounter. This, Todd and Ahmed both claim, insists on transitioning from understanding ethics as epistemological (what do I need to know about the other) and instead problematizes ethics through a relational understanding of being. Embedded in feminist/social ethics, relationality rests on a complex view of everyday experience "in terms of human relations and social structures" (Christians, 2003, p. 223). Such an understanding discloses the impossibility of putting oneself in the place of others. A feminist/social approach to ethics asks questions about power—that is, about domination and subordination—instead of questions about good and evil. Such an approach to ethics is centered on action aimed at subverting rather than reinforcing hegemonic relationships (Jagger, 1994).

Butler (2006), in her re-visitation of Irigaray's work, contends that the ethical relation is premised on the "*never yet known*, the open future, the one that cannot be assimilated to a knowledge that is always and already presupposed" (p. 115). Ethics does not claim to know in advance, "but seeks to know who that addressee is for the first time in the articulation of the question itself" (p. 115). This argument, Butler suggests poses a more difficult question: "How to

treat the Other well when the Other is never fully other, when one's own separateness is a function of one's dependency on the Other, when the difference between the Other and myself is, from the start equivocal" (p. 116). It is the *never yet known* that Todd (2003) argues is at the heart of educational relationships, stating that

our commitment to our students involves our capacity to be altered, to become someone different than we were before; and, likewise, our students' commitment to social causes through their interactions with actual people equally consists in their capacity to be receptive to the Other to the point of transformation. (p. 89)

Thus, ethics shifts from "getting to know the other" to an understanding grounded in bodied encounters—being-with—that are themselves ethical in nature. This, Todd (2003) contends, moves education from being

focused on acquiring knowledge about ethics, or about the Other, but would instead have to consider its practices themselves as relation to otherness and thus as always already potentially ethical—that is, participating in a network of relations that lend themselves to moments of nonviolence. (p. 9)

The intimacy of touching places us in relation to openness and risk and to what we cannot know beforehand, enabling us "to be vulnerable to the consequences and effects that our response has on the Other" (Todd, 2003, p. 88).

It is this understanding of ethics as being-with that is at the heart of the m/other relationship. In contrast to popular images of mothering, in which mothers appear with their designer baby totes, all terrain strollers, and put together knowledge of what to do to calm a sleepless infant or tantrum prone two year old, our experiences of mothering seep out of the borders of our skin in rolls of unshed "baby weight," sleepless nights that even caffeine cannot abate, and the ever present stain of baby spit-up on our sleeves. Mothering, we contend, is fraught with the unthought, the unknown, and always remains incomplete.

Embracing the unknown, m/othering transforms curriculum and requires us to consider "tangles of implication." Bodies imbricated in ethical and intimate touching encounters challenge us to examine "our desires for and enactments of, as well as our fears and revulsions toward, those identities and practices that exceed the 'norm'" (Miller, 2005, p. 223). The perspective of m/othering a bodied curriculum as difference points to possibilities for agency and transformation by examining the ways

in which students and teachers might negotiate the official discursive terrains of schooling that bound the "design and development" of curriculum as well as "identities". By investigating our "tangles of implication" in what we might come to see as contradictory and conflicting discursive constructions, we also might glimpse spaces through which to maneuver, spaces through which to resist, spaces for change. (Miller, 2005, p. 223)

These "tangles of implication" are what Borsato engages with through her performance works. Touching strangers, sleeping with cake, cooking with her aunts, and even licking and distilling objects, Borsato's intimate explorations through touch invite "one another to risk living at the edge of our skin, where we find the greatest hope of revisioning ourselves" (Boler, 1999, p. 200).

A bodied curriculum asserts that knowledge is corporeal; it is produced in and through touch—m/othering our own becoming.

## NOTES

1. We'd like to thank Marla Morris (2005) for her recent thoughts on the issue of "post" and embrace her concept of (post), understanding that "movements" do indeed overlap and intersect with one another.
2. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intimacy>, 2006)

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