

Coraline's split mothers: The maternal abject and the child care educator ^[1]

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Abstract

Early childhood education and care is, again, a focus of debate in Quebec, Canada. Government-subsidized childcare programs are being cut and the province's plan to open prekindergartens for children in impoverished areas is being met with contention. Invariably, the focus of the debate is on the children's needs, the parents' needs and society's needs. The educator is rarely mentioned. In this paper, I focus on the early childhood educator's subjective experiences (Chang-Kredl 2013) in a social system that undervalues their work as maternal, endorsing Grumet's (1988) close attention to women's internal experiences as a means of generating social change in education. I compare the social positioning of early childhood educators, in a Canadian context, with the representation of abjected maternal figures in a children's film, namely the split mothers in *Coraline* (2009). The argument for such a comparison is made through theories of maternal thinking (Ruddick 1995; Mullin 2009) and feminist readings of psychoanalytic theories related to the abject and the monstrous-feminine (Kristeva 1982; Creed 1993).

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