

Between Breastfeeding and Exams

Ontological "I", maternal "I", everything in between in female religious students' life stories

Dr. Liliane Steiner

Between Breastfeeding and Exams is based on the author's in-depth interviews with religious Jewish women, all mothers, who are students in a College of Teacher Education in Israel. The narratives highlight the feminine entrapment between the need to be a good-enough-mother and the desire to be an independent woman, self-fulfilling herself in the public sphere, while striving to build a successful professional life. As seen in this research, the experience of combining studies and motherhood, exposes and brings to the fore a female being blazing a path between an ontological I and a maternal I, along with the ongoing competition and clash between them. The experience of combining studies and motherhood sheds light on being a woman, and intensifies the experience of womanhood dictated by motherhood. It also displays and deploys a female strategic setup - both in the private sphere and the public sphere - put at work toward a female existential accuracy.

The research described here deals with the choices of female religious students. However, the dilemmas presented are shared by other women pursuing studies, or careers, all of whom make personal and professional decisions, day after day, to fulfill themselves.

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