

The illustration depicts a woman with dark hair styled in a bun, wearing a white lab coat over a yellow top and a red beaded necklace. She is holding a clipboard with a yellow sheet of paper and a pen. The background is a warm, brownish-orange color with geometric shapes and a window on the right side. The overall style is flat and modern.

Mothers in the Academe

Fall/Winter 2015
Volume 6, Number 2 \$22

Featuring articles by
Florence Pasche Guignard, Talia Esnard, Maki Motapanyane
and Kit Dobson, Laurel O’Gorman, BettyAnn Martin,
Summer R. Cunningham, Kirsten Isgro, Susan Rotolo,
Elizabeth R. Paré, and many more...



Mothers in the Academe

**Fall/Winter 2015
Volume 6, Number 2**

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Beyond Blame

Challenging the Myths and Inequities that Compromise Academic Mothers' Success

The hardships encountered by mothers in academe are compounded by certain cultural myths that define the social perception of women's roles in the realms of both maternal practice and academic work. Such myths enable inequity and allow institutions to remain ignorant regarding their responsibility for the reproduction of such inequities. Indeed, prejudice regarding mothers' perceived level of professional dedication and productivity is particularly difficult to eradicate, as are misconceptions surrounding issues of freedom and responsibility related to women's reproductive choices. As a result, a culture of mother blame has flourished that encourages women to admonish themselves for inadequacies related to both maternal practice and academic work. Through personal narrative and recourse to Anne-Marie Slaughter's controversial essay, "Why Women Still Can't Have it All," this article examines the myths informing social understandings of academic motherhood; challenges the meanings that are made and perpetuated by these misconceptions, which ultimately define academic mothers' experiences; and, strategizes possible solutions to women's struggle to reconcile their lives as mothers with their work as academics by positing, in particular, the value and applicability of maternal intelligences, such as empathy and innovation, beyond the domestic sphere. Ultimately, this article considers maternal ways of knowing as a site of wisdom and experiential knowledge that transcends prescriptive notions of academic productivity and attempts to heal the disjunction between women's maternal and academic labours by affirming the connection between who they are and what they do. Finally, by sharing the story of my own journey to a sustainable and expanded definition of academic motherhood, I hope to inspire others to share their stories and, thereby, encourage constructive dialogue as well as social and institutional reform.

In "The Dialectics of Reproduction" Mary O'Brien comments, "when we ask

questions about the suppression of women and its causes, the answers which are given usually relate the social condition of women to female reproductive function” (49). In the case of academic mothers, the realities of their lives as parents regularly conflict with the constant pressure to prove their professional worth. By supporting an arbitrary division between maternal and academic pursuits, perpetuating a culture of mother blame, and reproducing disadvantage based on reproductive choice, the social context mediating mothers’ perilous foothold in academe intensifies the burden of this conflict. Through recourse to personal narrative and Anne-Marie Slaughter’s controversial opinion essay “Why Women Still Can’t Have it All,” this paper will examine the cultural myths, and their underlying assumptions, that cultivate mother blame and enable social inequities that present genuine obstacles to academic mothers’ success. Most importantly, however, such myths divide academic mothers from themselves by supporting normative expectations regarding maternal identity and academic proficiency. Meaningful social and institutional reform, therefore, demands that mothers break the silence regarding their oppression and share personal narratives of the difficulties of parenting while pursuing a career in academe. Such dialogue potentially catalyzes social reform by challenging cultural misconceptions that have been both reproduced and reinforced by institutions that have been slow to acknowledge and accommodate academic mothers’ rights. This article, then, intends to challenge and change the status quo through four main objectives: to explore the myths underlying the cultural perception of academic motherhood that contribute to mother blame and institutional apathy; to consider the impact of these meanings on academic and maternal practices; to explore strategies that will facilitate and potentially harmonize the lives of women—especially the validation of maternal intelligences as powerful academic and professional resources—labouring in these arbitrarily divided spheres of influence; and, finally, to incite social and institutional reform through a reconsideration of normative definitions of maternal practice and academic productivity.

The birth of my first child impelled me to leave academe in my early twenties. When I returned to graduate studies in my forties, I was determined to ensure that the intensity of my renewed academic dedication would offset any perceived inadequacies stemming from maternal obligation. I soon realized that my previous willingness to absorb the burden of responsibility for not burning up the academic fast track was in keeping with my conditioned maternal tendency to engage in self-blame for what was actually systemic failure. Ultimately, it was reading Anne-Marie Slaughter’s controversial opinion essay, “Why Women Still Can’t Have it All,” that liberated my attitude towards my own academic journey and enabled my realization that many of the impediments to mothers’ academic success are not a function of compromised commitment and personal

choice but reflect a fundamental lack of cultural and institutional sensitivity. Additionally, I became acutely aware of the irony that the choices women have fought so hard to attain are regularly manipulated to release institutions of social responsibility and alleviate them of the burden to initiate essential reform.

Meaningful social change demands that mothers pursuing graduate studies reclaim agency by disavowing particular myths that reinscribe inequities and, thereby, encourage mothers to blame themselves for the conditions of their own oppression. Slaughter identifies three myths that are potentially damaging to mothers' professional and/or academic pursuits: the perception that a mother can only succeed if she is committed enough, if she marries the right partner, or if she can sequence her reproduction to coincide with her ambition. Such specious notions assume that if women fail to balance their work as mothers with the demands of a graduate program, they should be blamed for not working hard enough. Such myths must be routinely critiqued to liberate individual perception and to facilitate institutional change. Women must continue to advocate for their own needs by refusing role expectations that force inauthenticity and contribute to ideological definitions of the maternal that promote sacrifice and heroism; women must also continue to support and mentor their counterparts by sharing personal stories of frustration and success that represent the diversity of mothers' academic experiences and, thereby, challenge the status quo; and academe must formally acknowledge past prejudice and prove its commitment to innovation and creativity by redefining productivity and the nature of meaningful contributions, in light of the particular wisdom that women's experience as mothers brings to their work as academics.

In many ways, the myth that personal dedication is directly proportional to achievement has the potential to do the most damage to women's self-conception by validating a culture of mother blame. Indeed, the prejudicial subtext underlying assessments of any mother's dedication to academe is the socially conditioned supposition that the demands of motherhood represent a formidable obligation that will undoubtedly compromise her commitment to graduate school. By contrast, however, individuals give little consideration to how much time their male academic counterpart is willing to divert from family responsibilities and/or recreational interests to pursue graduate work. The management of his private life is presumed to be his responsibility; he is trusted to organize his time. Therefore, the implicit belief that childcare work and domestic management are solely a mother's responsibility must be challenged if the prejudices of academe are to be discarded. As well, culturally constructed definitions of motherhood that compel women to undertake an oppressive litany of maternal labours—in addition to completing coursework and working on a thesis or dissertation—must also be disputed. The reality of the academic mother's workload is relevant because only in exposing the

inequity of the institutional imperatives of both motherhood and graduate studies will it be possible for universities, upper-level administrators, program coordinators, and supervisors to understand the unique circumstances of academic mothers and to accommodate their needs by instituting measures to enable their success. Increased online course offerings, video-recorded lectures, absence without penalty, and course offerings that do not conflict with daycare or school pick-up/drop-off times are all easily instituted, cost-neutral solutions to some of the daily struggles mothers encounter in their efforts to meet the practical obligations of both parenthood and graduate studies.

Meaningful reform, however, begins with a change in perception. Katharine Zaleski argues that women who shame other women and make assumptions about dedication based on arbitrary measures like hours logged are “hurting their future selves” (“Female Company President”). Rather than trying to gauge the level of an academic mother’s commitment by recourse to culturally informed biases, universities and the academic community must address the hardship of mothers in academe as a human rights issue that requires not only increasing social awareness and implementing institutional reform but also accommodating the changing reality of family situations. For many mothers, the minutia of prescribed maternal responsibility is an impediment to sustained intellectual rigour and academic production. Holding women accountable, however, for failing to reconcile a culturally derived dichotomy—between the demands of motherhood and the rigid expectations of academe—blames the victim for institutional inequities rooted in cultural bias relating to the role of women in society.

Slaughter argues that the remaining myths underlying women’s oppression in academe follow from the first: if the initial presumption that women are ultimately responsible for family management is taken as a given, then a woman can only succeed if she can find a kind-hearted partner that will shoulder some of *her* burden or if she is willing to delay childrearing. In this way, the responsibility to offset the impact of systemic prejudice is considered the mandate of each individual woman; her success is deemed a matter of personal choice. By extension, however, a woman’s academic career is at the mercy of chance, both in terms of partner selection and fertility. Open-mindedness and cooperation should be a public mandate. Academic success should not be a lottery where women only win through the choice of a particular partner; nor should women be forced to limit their reproduction to ensure academic employment or security. Mothers pursuing graduate studies confront a number of very personal decisions; however, the private nature of these choices should not exempt society or its institutions from accountability because the pressures informing women’s decision making are heavily influenced by cultural assumptions regarding maternal obligation.

The notion that timing reproduction to coincide with the demands of academe gives women control over their professional timelines and trajectory creates the illusion of freedom through choice and forces women to internalize the conditions of their own subjugation. In relation to graduate work, this concept of self-regulation is particularly poignant as many women delay family life until they are either hired as instructors or have tenure, which in most cases does not occur until their mid-thirties or early forties. Prior to achieving tenure, academic mothers' labour has most likely been exploited in the form of sessional contracts, if such work is even available. Given the absence of job security and the overwhelming wage disparity between tenure-track hires and contract faculty, the decision to delay family life is, perhaps, no longer a reproductive choice but rather an institutional imperative, as well as an issue of personal economic survival. Mary O'Brien argues that the advent of reproductive technology means that women's freedom to choose birth "creates a transformation in human consciousness of human relations with the natural world which must, as it were, be re-negotiated" (51); however, I would argue that the benefits of this technology are often used to pressure women to schedule reproduction for a time that is less likely to conflict with the demands of professionalization. Because women are "free" to manage and delay their reproduction, any hardship they suffer by attempting to raise a family while pursuing an academic career is understood as willfully chosen and, therefore, not a matter of social responsibility. It is evident, then, that reproductive consciousness is manipulated to support ideological and institutional agendas. Due to the time and energy required to campaign against such insidious forms of reproductive control, many women decide to remain silent and childless rather than lobby for reforms during the formative years of their careers.

Ultimately, cultural misconceptions of reproductive freedom and attendant responsibility must be scanned. Often women "choose" to remain childless because they know that they will encounter discrimination and great odds against their success. Indeed, female academics generally presume their commitment to academe implies a commitment to childlessness for the term of their graduate work and sessional employment. However, there are very real physical and emotional implications of this choice as women who delay childbearing often confront issues of infertility, increased risks in pregnancy, and/or complications in childbirth due to advanced age. These women must independently negotiate the complexities of being present for their growing children and of working desperately to update their resumes. If, on the other hand, a woman chooses to have her family before tenured employment, she faces the scrutiny of department chairs, graduate supervisors, and many of her childless-by-choice colleagues who presume that she is working at a disad-

vantage because she has decided to have children. This perception of personal freedom through reproductive choice is, therefore, less liberating for female academics than it is for institutions that wish to abnegate responsibility for issues of gender inequality related to maternity.

By refusing role expectations that enable oppression, academic mothers have the potential to become powerful agents of social change. Educational theorist and activist Paulo Freire argues that, in terms of agency, the individual is not acting as a subject unless he or she can use powers of critical perception towards the project of social reform. He suggests that individuals are mere objects unless they work to transform the social condition. As objects, humans merely adapt to the circumstances of oppression; but, as agents, individuals exercise the power to challenge cultural misconceptions toward the objectives of change and growth. Freire argues that unless humans consciously enact their freedom, they become ignorant of choice. He argues that individuals are “maneuvered by myths that powerful social forces have created” and the greatest harm to humanity is our domination by these myths such that “without even realizing it, [we] relinquish the power of choice” (5). To reclaim the power of choice and generate an increasing number of choices for women negotiating the balance between family and academic study, mothers must challenge the aforementioned myths and redefine the meaning of mothering for themselves, their families, and ultimately for society.

As a graduate student, I was forced to challenge normative assumptions regarding maternal responsibility when I realized that housework had become my lowest priority and that the consequences of this decision were becoming increasingly evident. I then had a discussion with my children about communal responsibility and the need to share labour essential for the functioning of the family. I told them that I would contribute to the home, but they would also be expected to do a portion of the tasks associated with the household. My children were, at first, reluctant until we critically appraised the concept of equity in relation to the social expectations of motherhood. In addition to educating my family, I had to liberate *myself* from prescribed meanings of motherhood. With that realization, I became increasingly comfortable with stepping over stuff, although I still feel pangs of guilt when I walk into a room overtaken by piles of papers, toys, books, or clothing. Ultimately, the dominant ideology deeply invests in oppressive definitions of the maternal; women’s engagement with the ethic of care is encouraged by cultural representations that idealize maternal devotion and is enforced by social institutions that rely heavily on the benefits of unpaid maternal labour. As a result of the reproduction of this cultural construct, the scripted performance of motherhood has become a kind of “mind forged manacle” (Blake), so heavily embedded in women’s concept of maternal self-hood that imagining alternative possibilities has become virtually

impossible. The freedom to imagine diverse modes of being and knowing becomes possible only when mothers challenge these internalized myths and strive to achieve autonomy, authentic Selves, and social change.

In addition to starting dialogue within the family, I encourage mother-scholars to advocate for social change by remaining vocal, within the context of their professional and social groups, about their real life struggles. By necessity, many academic mothers become experts in time management and domestic resiliency; however, displaying a domestic heroism does less to support other women than sharing counternarratives exploring the hardships of juggling academic work with mothering. It is important for women to be honest, in both personal and professional circles, about the demands of their workload as well as the physical and emotional toll it takes on their lives. Such vulnerability is a risk, but authenticity is generally rewarded with returned honesty, support, and community. Ultimately, disclosing the struggles to negotiate academic study with motherhood challenges the culturally invested pretense that mothers are superhuman or saintly beings. Indeed, this pretense fuels the myth of maternal perfection and inevitably fosters self-blame when academic mothers realize that they require social and institutional support to meet the demands of their professional and maternal roles. Sharing stories of their unique challenges creates a space for academic mothers to acknowledge the reality of their oppression, form a community, and strategize methods of improvement. This solidarity will build conditions not only for academic fairness but also for a collegial atmosphere considerate of women at all stages of their academic and family lives.

Personal narratives of success and frustration represent the diversity of the maternal experience, challenge the normative expectations of motherhood, and provide support for women seeking liberation and mentorship. Personal accounts of struggle and accomplishment, in addition to formalized opportunities for further sharing, challenge the myths that inscribe maternal oppression. Journals, such *JMI*, and university conferences that attempt to name “the problem that has no name” (Friedan 15) are essential to promoting a dialogue that inspires women to envision a destiny beyond the “glory [of] their own femininity” (15). The lives and stories of fellow academics provide meaningful insights into reconciling the practical demands of life as a mother with the work as a scholar. In my own experience, I could not fully appreciate the complexity of reconciling these demands until I encountered Heidegger’s concept of *seinsvergessenheit* (35): the disconnect that academics often experience between their lives and the realm of ideas. I realized that as a scholar it was easy to lose touch with life, the living referent, in pursuit of the world of signs and abstraction. For academic mothers, this schism is particularly relevant as children are the living referents and the connection to their lives is often compromised by the

demands of academe. Therefore, the capacity for academic mothers to reconcile maternal practice with their professional endeavours is important not only to ensure a continued connection with children as they grow, but also to ensure an integrated maternal identity.

By choosing distance education and selecting a project that has resonance with my lived experience of mothering, I have made a conscious effort to align my course of academic study with the life of my family. I have reframed success in terms amenable to life with children. To say that my goals as an academic are not about institutional recognition is not a compromise. I have rather redefined accomplishment for myself, sharpened my own critical awareness, and overseen personal growth. While scientific research emphasizes objectivity, quantifiability, and certitude, my research focuses on democratic access to knowledge based on qualitative, subjective, and experience-based findings that, though not generalizable, can initiate critical dialogue, inspire individual freedom, and catalyze social change. In other words, my life and work as a mother have become sources of inspiration for my academic research. Complete synergy may not be possible for all mothers who pursue graduate studies, yet much insight can be gained when academic mothers embrace their living referent and weave embodied experiences of the maternal into other aspects of their lives (Laney et al. 1245). Through this connection, mothers in academe are not divided from the self but are grounded by ways of knowing rooted in personal experience. Moreover, narratives of lived experience help other academics to confidently defy expectations of both motherhood and academe and reconcile personal and professional demands.

Ultimately, intellectual projects that resonate with personal experience have the power to sustain and rejuvenate mothers who do academic work. Carola Conle describes this quest for continuity as “getting on the road we are already on” (200). In the midst of personal and academic pursuits, individuals are often disconnected from the truth of their own experience and fail to see the connection between what they do and who they are. Women and mothers, in particular, are conditioned to disregard particular experiences and expressions of self-hood in favour of more socially acceptable manifestations of accomplishment; and, through this conditioning, women lose sight of the relevance of personal and embodied experiences and their importance to the evolution of identity. If academic mothers are able to appreciate the resonance between their life’s journey and a chosen field of research, they will gain critical perspective on the value of personal ways of knowing and bridge the gap between theory and practice. In this way, mother-scholars will use the practical knowledge gained by mothering to creatively enhance their academic research. To further Conle’s metaphor, enhanced sensitivity to the relationship between an individual’s personal and academic lives will point all roads *home*, defined as a continuity of

being derived from the connection between personal and professional lives. To glimpse this connection and heal the divide, academic mothers must abandon oppressive definitions and categories in favour of a more expansive concept of self-hood that acknowledges diverse expressions of maternal identity and values mothering practice as a valuable academic resource.

Women pursuing graduate work are often encouraged to suppress their maternal self-conception; however, as Sara Ruddick argues, maternal knowledge represents a source of resilience and potentiality that needs to be reclaimed for a renewed definition of professional competency. Ruddick identifies maternal thinking and learning as a conceptual scheme that regularly confronts duality and cognitive dissonance. Mothers learn to adapt to an ever-evolving *other*, and in the practice of mothering “innovation takes precedence over permanence, disclosure and responsiveness over clarity and certainty” (101). Through this imaginative capacity, the mother is responsive to change and otherness, which represents key features of the resiliency required to negotiate the rigours of academic work. Indeed, the maternal bond is thought to be the primary reason that “women are said to value open over closed structure, to eschew the clear-cut and unambiguous, to refuse a sharp division between inner and outer or self and other” (101). Maternal experience, then, offers considerable practice in versatility and flexibility as well as in fostering a well-developed aptitude for innovation and empathy. Of these, empathy is the most valuable as it contributes to effective communication by engaging the powers of perception and intuition. Indeed, Freire argues that there can be no meaningful dialogue without equality rooted in empathy (40). Social change demands dialogue that abandons certitudes in favour of open-ended possibilities. Therefore, rather than eschewing maternal experience as an obstacle to academic accomplishment, mothers, and the institutions that they are affiliated with, must recognize the utility of the particular intelligences and cognitive abilities of which academic mothers, through maternal practice, are already proficient.

This reconsideration of maternal skill and experience in relation to work in academe brings us to the issue of redefining institutional notions of productivity and meaningful contribution. I would like to think that by raising five children I have been incredibly productive over the past twenty years; yet, whenever I am asked to complete an online form or resumé asking for my employment history, qualifications, and publication record, I find myself instantly shamed by my lack of so-called productivity. The shame is compounded by the fact that I am in my forties and have little in the way of documentation to demonstrate my employability. However, because silent discrimination based on age and/or reproductive choice is difficult to confront, I dutifully complete the requisite documents, uncomfortable in the knowledge that my years of mothering experience have been voided by the prejudice inscribed by form-fillable categories.

When confronted with paperwork related to employment history, I often find myself wanting to add a box, or to employ the vagueness of “other” to document my almost quarter century of maternal practice and the various attendant skills and knowledge learned in that period; however, there is no legitimate means available to communicate, quantify, or validate that experience. As a result, no union can intervene on my behalf; organized labour protects the rights of the employed and supports the allocation of contract work based on a points system that heavily rewards previous work experience. This system, however, discriminates against mothers by selecting eligible candidates based on measures of productivity that fail to acknowledge qualifications that are classified as neither publications nor proof of previous academic employment. Knowing this, I understand that my resumé and its various temporal holes will invite particular assumptions about my level of commitment; and, under the guise of objectivity, I will be assigned a score that penalizes my many absent years from recognizable forms of academic achievement. If the meaning of productivity is redefined, maternal competencies will come to be formally recognized and acknowledged as valuable assets beyond the private sphere.

However, given the current economic and political realities, it is harder than ever for graduate student mothers’ academic innovation, creativity, and empathy to find recognition. Although universities give incredible lip service to the value of education, community, and democracy, these values have weakened and become closer to corporate models of efficiency and productivity. As a result, research that fails to find economic solutions to social problems, that challenges government policies, or that attempts to raise issues confronting marginalized communities often goes unfunded and unpublished. While educational scholars insist that maternal aptitudes, such as empathy, resilience, and creativity, represent the cornerstone of any education for cultivating personal and social growth and developing a critical consciousness (Freire 35), few admission boards or hiring committees have the foresight to recognize work that demands routine practice of these very skills. Ultimately, institutional definitions of productivity must be reconceptualized to reflect the importance of maternal ways of knowing not only as academic assets, but also as a source of wisdom vital to the preservation of humanitarian ideals in education.

To initiate change, academic mothers must resist the temptation to compartmentalize or suppress their maternal knowledge and consciously explore the connection between domestic labour, knowledge, and the power of resistance. bell hooks comments that while white middle-class women were fighting for their right to work outside the home, women of colour found self-worth and meaning in their home life: “Historically women have identified work in the context of the family as *humanizing labour*, work that affirms their identity as women, as human beings showing love and care” (145). The refiguring of

maternal work as a valuable and humanizing site of knowledge has important implications for women's ability to confidently reconstruct an academic identity through maternal practice. hooks' concept of *homeplace* recalls experience as the grounding force of personal meaning, which fuels critical consciousness rooted in empathy; *homeplace* becomes a foundation where "we can regain lost perspective, give life new meaning. We can make homeplace that space where we return for renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole" (389). In other words, rather than a burden obstructing academic success, the *homeplace* must be refigured as a site of invaluable, experiential knowledge. hooks argues that women have "essential wisdom to share" and "practical experience, [which] is the breeding ground for all useful theory" (389). Acknowledgement of the wisdom inherent to embodied ways of knowing centralizes the importance of maternal thinking and learning and challenges dominant cultural narratives regarding the nature of knowledge.

However, for individuals struggling with job security and the economic pressures from living and working to support the needs of a family, exercising the power of resistance can be particularly difficult. It is undeniably easier to play within the rules of an, albeit, unfair game than to expend the energy and incur the risk required to challenge the very objectives of the game or its terms of victory. Many do not have the luxury of time or money to resist the game; instead, many choose to walk away or vow to return when the playing field is more level. The unfortunate reality is that, though the metaphor is apt, this is no game. Women's livelihood and their right to pursue a graduate degree or academic employment option should not be compromised by their choice to have children. It is necessary for graduate students, their colleagues, as well as the institutions that support their research, to expose and dismantle the social and institutional inequities that often prevent academic mothers from realizing their goals of degree completion, academic publication, and employment.

The creative innovation that institutions argue is at the heart of their educational programs and research portfolios must also be employed to address the issue of women's struggle to balance the demands of graduate work and family life. Distance education may not permit women to be as engaged with university culture, but it does allow mothers to participate in coursework without the burden of regular attendance; and, when attendance is mandatory, the provision of affordable, on-site daycare enables graduate student mothers to sync their parental and academic lives. Also, within the university admissions process, accommodations have already been made for first generation postsecondary students; there are special scholarships and information seminars available as well as support groups and mentoring intended to reduce culture shock and smooth the transition. The same might be done for mothers in graduate programs. Mothers often feel alone in academe, particularly when they are

alienated from the university community by family responsibilities. It would be comforting to see—through various initiatives introduced to encourage success and prevent attrition—genuine institutional consideration for mothers pursuing graduate work. Moreover, beyond improving sensitivity, universities have an obligation to reevaluate hiring procedures and traditional categories of productivity to recognize women's labour outside the normative expectations of academe. To facilitate this process, unions would have to support special consideration scoring for academic mothers seeking employment, as equity often means examining an individual based on her unique circumstances. In the case of graduate student mothers, standard assessments fail to take into account their wealth of experiential knowledge and the interconnectivity of their personal and academic lives. Ultimately, only reform through social awareness and institutional change can liberate academic mothers to pursue a vision of themselves as successful scholars that accommodates maternal practice.

To advance this vision, mothers must remain vocal about their experience of oppression and the silence-enabling prejudice must also be openly addressed. Although an apology is not a sufficient solution, it is an acknowledgement that initiates constructive dialogue. In an open letter of apology to working mothers, PowerToFly president, Katharine Zaleski, expressed regret for a number of instances throughout her career in which she questioned the commitment and productivity of her female counterparts who had children. Although her letter addresses mothers outside of academe, it has resonance for academic mothers as well: "For mothers ... it's death by a thousand cuts—and sometimes it's other women holding the knives. I didn't realize this—or how horrible I'd been—until five years later, when I gave birth to a daughter of my own" ("Female Company President"). Ironically, the experience of having a child gave Zaleski the empathy required to understand the circumstances of other mothers and their struggle to reconcile the demands of their private and professional lives. Her maternal intelligence is now the creative inspiration behind PowertoFly, an innovative and lucrative business venture where professional women worldwide are enabled to work from their home. This example of reconciliation through growing awareness suggests that when individuals and institutions are willing to acknowledge and rectify discrimination, mothers are liberated from the blame that they have shouldered for systemic inequality and are freed to imagine success beyond the cultural dictates of their maternal role.

Indeed, such imaginative freedom depends on social change rooted in both women and institutions' growing awareness of the transferability of the experiential knowledge acquired through the practice of mothering. As noted, empathy, creativity, innovation, and resiliency are just a few of the competencies women acquire in the practice of mothering vital to sustainable professional

and educational modalities of the future. Through advocacy and by necessity, we hope to move in academe toward an age when a mother's experiential knowledge will be accepted as a meaningful contribution to professionalization; when the sheer list of publications and courses taught will not be considered complete picture of a woman's expertise, her level of commitment, her potential for productivity, or her eligibility for academic employment.

How many promising scholars, feeling forced to choose between family and academic life, have quietly abandoned their program of study? How many have internalized the myths that enable oppression and blamed themselves for failing to meet the expectations of both motherhood and academe? How many have felt like imposters—their real lives beckoning with all the intensity that the immediacy of their children's needs implies—as they worked to build a resumé and construct a life on paper? Only when maternal thinking and learning are respected as ways of knowing will the schism between the lived experience and utility of mothering find reconciliation with a mother's dedication to a life of research. The two need not be mutually exclusive. Through awareness and advocacy, academic mothers are liberated to explore the continuity between who they are and what they do. By engaging a life of the mind, informed by the lived experience of mothering, academic mothers have the potential to bridge the divide between the realm of domestic responsibility, or *homeplace*, and a life of academic study. In this way, caring for children and pursuing graduate work need not be competing interests but potentialities that enrich and inform each other in ways that have meaningful implications for personal and professional growth and sustainability.

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Maybe, Maybe ... PhD Baby?

Although academic publications over the past several decades have steadily reported the perspectives of female academics related to the topic of motherhood, less attention has been paid to the specific factors that influence when and why PhD students have children. With greater numbers of doctoral graduates entering postdoctoral studies (many at an age when the average Canadian is contemplating having their first child), it seems necessary that student voices be added to discussions concerning family in the academy. This personal narrative essay intends to explore some of the factors that might impact family planning for doctoral students. Utilizing journal entries written by the author during her undergraduate and graduate training, issues such as the timing of pregnancy in the life course, pronatalism, the presumed existence of a woman's biological clock, and unintended pregnancy will be critically examined.

Introduction

To some graduate students, the decision to combine a doctoral degree with the time and energy consuming role of parent might seem like a complete impossibility. Those of us who choose to pursue this type of educational commitment often restructure our entire lives around our studies and very quickly learn that sleep, leisure time, relationships, and, even, family planning may need to take a backseat to a hectic academic schedule. These realities have never been lost on me. Over the past eight years of my graduate school training, it has been my ambitions and my desire to support my partner Dave's future academic career that has kept even the mere discussion of pregnancy at bay. Yet in recent years, I have found myself wondering when might be the right time to have children in the academy (i.e., during graduate school, during a postdoctoral fellowship,

during the first years of a tenure-track position, after achieving tenure) and how Dave and I might go about making decisions that pit our future family against our future careers.

It has been my hope for a family that has driven me, over time, to informally seek advice from every academic parent I could find, whether they be a professor, a postdoctoral fellow, or a graduate student. Some have reflected back thirty years to when they had their children, often during graduate school, while others have confided their experiences in me with a very large pregnant belly visible. The reasons not to have children in the academy have always seemed numerous and, in my experience, are oftentimes reiterated by sources who are not parents themselves. One tenured male professor—with children of his own, in addition to a partner at home—offered the following advice: “a baby might impede productivity and delay your ability to graduate.” A female postdoctoral trainee who wanted to someday become a parent but, at the time of our conversation, was in the throes of looking for a tenure-track position suggested that “a baby might decrease the career possibilities available to you ... you’d be way less portable to just pick up and go to whatever institution wants you.” Several established male and female academics (some without children, some who had chosen not to be the primary caregivers in their families) have also articulated that a baby could be looked on as a hindrance in competitive academic circles. Despite this presumably well-meaning advice, I have persisted in my search for someone who has cracked the formula to balance both academic life and parenthood.

Where Babies Come From...

Before a discussion of pregnancy can begin, I feel obligated to explain the circumstances that have led to my even contemplating such a possibility. Dave and I met as undergraduate students and had been great friends for years before we began dating in 2007 in our mid-twenties, just as I was just starting my Master’s of Public Health (MPH) in Thunder Bay and he was beginning his PhD in Toronto. We had both recently ended long-term relationships and were not looking to become seriously involved with anyone. Rather than pursuing the quickest path to secure careers, marriage, and children, we instead chose the winding road of postgraduate education and all the sacrifices that it entails (e.g., small stipends, grubby apartments, and projects that you can never mentally shut off from). We spent the early years of our relationship throwing ourselves into our work, although we made time to speak nightly on the phone and flew back and forth to see each other when we could. The almost fourteen hundred kilometre distance between us allowed me to achieve a great deal academically and enabled my self-esteem to grow through the knowledge that I could indeed

“hack it” in graduate school. Over time, however, this distance left me feeling increasingly isolated and lonely. Although our relationship arrangement may have been ideal from a productivity perspective, my one-track career mind created an emotional void and emptiness that only grew with each passing month. Good grades and academic advancement could not laugh with me over a home-cooked meal or spoon with me in bed at night, while I complained that my feet were always cold. The academy did not tell me that it loved me every day, and it was not the only thing I wanted to build my life around. I began to consider whether Dave was the person that I could consider having a family with someday. After two years in Thunder Bay, I had had enough. In the summer of 2009, I packed up my stuff and moved back to Southern Ontario and in with Dave to finish my degree.

In 2013, at the age of thirty-one, we took the plunge, so to speak, and decided to get married. This decision was at least in part motivated by our knowledge that officially being husband and wife would make it easier for us to obtain working visas should we decide to pursue postdoctoral training in the United States or further abroad. In many ways, this formalization of our relationship immediately exposed us to a social pressure to start a family in ways we had never encountered before. I don't think our reception was even over before I was asked “so when can we expect to see you pregnant?” While both Dave and I are fortunate enough to have doctoral supervisors who would not discourage a decision to have a child, we remain rather dumbfounded as to when might be the right time in an academic career to start a family. Indeed, decisions about when to become a parent are often shaped by an individual's position in life, and this process is likely no different for those entering postgraduate education.

Given that the number of Canadian female graduate students has been shown to be roughly equal to that of men—i.e., women make up approximately 47 percent of all doctoral enrolments in Canada (Statistics Canada 5)—the issue of exactly when, or even if, to have a child in an academic career can be a tricky one. Individuals beginning a PhD degree in their early to mid-twenties can often afford to put off the decision to have children until after they have completed their graduate training. Such a strategy can help to relieve some of the stress and stigma associated with being both a student and a new parent and avoid the potential losses in productivity that could result from the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth (Drago and Williams 48; Lynch, “An immodest proposal”). Waiting until one or both partners have found secure postgraduation employment can also help to alleviate some of the financial stress that a maternity or parental leave might create. Often, couples are left to decide whether it makes more sense to wait until after they have graduated to have children and risk issues with infertility or have children and risk negatively

impacting their research and writing productivity. Despite all the complexities involved, I still cannot shake the urge to find room in my life, somewhere, for a child. Chronicling an important period in the lives of many young academics, this personal narrative, based largely on my journals and best recollections, explores the multitude of factors that have influenced my decision making surrounding motherhood while in graduate studies.

Dodging the Baby Bullet

Spring 2005, end of fourth year of my undergraduate degree, age twenty-two

“Congratulations to the graduating class of 2005!” This phrase, uttered by my undergraduate university’s commencement speaker, signifies that I have achieved a goal I have been working towards since childhood. The all night study sessions, the jam-packed exam schedules, hundreds of pages of essay writings, my hilariously entertaining extracurricular life—I have survived it all. I have also managed to complete the entire journey without being side tracked by an unexpected pregnancy. As peculiar as it sounds, this particular achievement is my private cause for a second celebration on this joyous day.

Being the incessant worrier that I am, I have spent my entire university career terrified that I would unexpectedly become pregnant. During my undergraduate degree, it was the fear that I was too young, too immature, and too financially unstable to have a baby that kept me faithfully taking my birth control pills each day. As an unmarried and unemployed student, I feared that an unplanned pregnancy might jeopardize my ability to graduate and potentially impact my future career goals. Each month when my period arrived I said a little thank you to the higher reproductive powers that be that I had, once again, dodged a baby bullet.

Although both males and females possess the ability to create a child as soon as each has fully entered puberty, a well promoted North American societal notion says that adolescence is not an appropriate time in life to become a parent. This may be due, in part, to a belief that most young adults lack sufficient understanding of the responsibilities associated with parenthood (e.g., understanding the financial realities, sacrifices necessary to one’s social life, conflicts with childcare and education) to make fully informed family planning decisions (Aggleton and Campbell 285-286). In Canada, we have reinforced these societal beliefs through various avenues, including drafting laws that limit the sexual activity of children under the age of sixteen (e.g., age of consent for sexual activity with an older partner, requiring parental consent for minors to marry) and encouraging social stigmas attached to teenage pregnancy (Wiemann et al. e4; Luker 17, 99). Particularly for teenage women, there can be a social expectation that “good girls” should be smart enough to either abstain from

sex, terminate an unwanted pregnancy or, at the very least, take the necessary contraceptive precautions to avoid having an unplanned child.

Although less stigmatized, individuals choosing to take on a parental role in early adulthood (i.e., between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two) also appear to face challenges. Historically, youth have tackled many of the life events associated with adulthood (e.g., finishing their education, securing a career, getting married, buying a home, having children) in their late teenage years or early twenties; however, millennial youth have increasingly decided to delay their pursuit of these responsible adult benchmarks to complete undergraduate and/or postgraduate education (a mandatory requirement for many careers in a competitive workforce) (Jayson). This focus on education, in addition to the time and financial constraints that can be involved with a student lifestyle, could all be viewed as possible barriers to so-called responsibly providing for a child (Shaienks, Gluszynski, and Bayard). As a consequence, some youth may choose to delay parenthood until after they have completed their academic training and have secured gainful employment.

Reproductive choices may also be influenced by the well-promoted notion that women's reproductive years are finite. Although most women understand that as they approach their midthirties, their chances of encountering infertility and pregnancy complications increase (Mayo Foundation), this knowledge has not stopped many women from waiting until this age to start trying to conceive. Statistics show that the average age of first pregnancy for women in Canada is 29.6 years, with mothers over the age of thirty accounting for approximately 51.2 percent of births (Employment and Social Development Canada). Such statistics likely reflect the idea that women (myself included) are waiting for their lives and careers to become more stable before having children.

Child's Play

Winter 2009, second year of MPH, age twenty-five

I seem to dream of nothing but babies; vivid, emotional dreams about being pregnant, about labouring, about falling asleep with a newborn in my arms; the delicate smell of Johnson's baby shampoo filling my nostrils. I have never had thoughts like this in my life; in fact, I've never really thought all that seriously about having kids at all. It's always been "maybe...someday" for me. Now, it's as if the alarm on my biological clock were blaring, and I can't shut it off. I find myself waking up in the morning with my goose-down pillow curled up to my stomach. Sometimes I find myself reaching down and clutching it as if it were real. It takes me back to my childhood, much of which was spent playing in my family's basement rec room. Probably bored one day and looking for something silly to do, one of my friends had devised a game where we would stuff my mother's embroidered throw pillows up our shirts

and pretend we were pregnant mothers. We would waddle around the room in the same uncomfortable way we had witnessed real pregnant women waddle around the neighbourhood, their swollen feet shuffling across the asphalt. The real fun seemed to involve seeing just how many pillows our cotton t-shirts could hold... just how big of a pregnant belly our tiny eight-year-old frames could handle. Inevitably, we would fall to the floor laughing at the hilarity of such a state in our lives and thankful that we could just take the pillows out and move on to another game. A pregnant belly at this stage of life would mean changes for me that are far more permanent (and I'm not just talking about the stretch marks). Still, I find myself standing naked in front of my bedroom mirror, puffing out my stomach. Would I carry the way my mother did with me, barely a bump at all on her slender, six-foot frame?

Women have strong emotions and many influences regarding the decision making surrounding motherhood. Some have described a physical yearning or an urge to bring life into the world that can start as an “itch” and evolve into a full-blown obsession (Orenstein 169; Ulrich and Weatherall 328). Prominent feminist leisure scholar Betsy Wearing (37) has even stated that a woman’s mere potential to give birth and nurse a child has made the role of mother appear to be a “natural” responsibility for women. To me, these sentiments encapsulate the strong pronatalist messaging that women receive in our society related to motherhood (Ayers 5; Morell 315), messaging that I am not immune to, even in the academy.

Indeed, for many women in North American society, a belief persists that they cannot be normal, complete, or psychologically well without occupying the role of biological mother (Ayers 13; Rich et al. 235). For some women, the desire to become a mother was socially encouraged through how they played as children. North American girls, long before they are reproductively mature, have traditionally been encouraged to hone their nurturing skills in play centered around caretaking and social proximity (i.e., pretending to be a mother to dolls or pets) (Ulrich and Weatherall 328; Formanek-Brunell 127). From the perspective of some members of society, children who express nurturance, domestic competence, and empathy for others and who take care of their dolls as children (i.e. carefully feeding, changing, dressing, and loving these pretend children) are likely to develop into responsible parents, capable of showering the same sort of care and affection on their future families (Francis 329; Kane 158).

Other women have reported their desire for a child as something that slowly snuck up on them in their lives, hinting at possible ties to age and a woman’s so-called biological clock. This concept of women having a clock slowly ticking down to their eventual reproductive demise is generally thought to have emerged in the 1970s when the term was associated with white, middle-class women who intentionally chose to delay having children in order to pursue careers (Friese, Becker, and Nachtigall 1551). More recently, the biological clock

has been described as a women's sense of the interconnection or disconnection between the social and physiological domains of her body, and can be seen to underlie the question "how long can I reasonably wait to have a baby?" (Friese, Becker, and Nachtigall 1551).

My Perfect Breeding Ground

Winter 2010, third year of my MPH, age twenty-seven

Far too early on a dreary Saturday morning in December, I step off the subway and walk the block to the office tower that houses my gynecologist's office. I stand at the revolving doors of this imposing structure, look up, and sigh. I don't want to be here. I would much rather be at home, snuggled up next to Dave in the safety of our bed, but I slogged my way out here for a search-and-rescue mission of sorts. I have come to have the doctor locate a lost IUC (inter-uterine contraceptive) device that was inserted inside my body last year, at a time when I had become increasingly frustrated with the havoc the birth control pill was wreaking on my body. While the whole IUC installation experience had been a complete nightmare (and had essentially involved shoving a drinking straw through my cervix, causing a crushing pain that felt as though my uterus were being wrung out like a dish rag), the tiny device had been able to provide me with some peace from my monthly worry of becoming a student mommy. Unfortunately, the IUC had shifted at some point and now the contraption was missing, seemingly swallowed whole. I picture it jangling around inside my uterus like the bell inside a cat's toy. "Stupid thing" I mumble to myself as I shove my way through the revolving doors.

This gynecologist is young (maybe forty) and boyishly handsome, with just a hint of a European accent that I can't seem to pinpoint exactly. Though he is not stern per se, his bedside manner is not what I would call warm. I shift nervously in the scratchy gown and feel the crinkle of the sterile table paper beneath me. After taking my medical history, and ascertaining exactly what my visit is for, we get down to business. "So, you planning on trying to start a family?" he asks as he rolls his squeaky stool up to the examination table. "Oh goodness no," I reply, slightly shocked by the question, "I've just been accepted into a PhD program." Judging by the confused look on his face, I assume that that he does not see pregnancy and postgraduate education as mutually exclusive concepts. "It's just that normally women your age coming in to have these devices removed are looking to have children" he replies, flatly. I can feel paranoia setting in as the wheels in my head start turning. The doctor knows my age from my medical chart. Is his question merely a subtle way of pointing out that I've got a finite amount of time left to have children? That I might want to think about using my eggs while they are still viable? I am suddenly self-conscious and worry that maybe my reaction to his question was a bit antibaby. After all, I do want to have children... eventually; they just don't fit into the overall plan for my life right

now. Desperate to do a bit of damage control, I utter, in my most convincing baby positive voice, "well, maybe in a few years" as he pulls up the ultrasound equipment to begin his search.

Women have cited strong cultural expectations related to motherhood as one of the most influential factors in their decision to conceive a child (Bergum). From the perspective of many societies, a woman's social status is primarily defined by her role as a mother and her value as a person associated with her ability to conceive and bear biological children (Ulrich and Weatherall 335; Parry 337-338). While the widespread use of contraception and access to legal abortions in Canada now provides some (but not all) women with greater control over their reproductive capabilities, those who are either unwilling or unable to become pregnant may find their choices judged by a pronatalist society (Ulrich and Weatherall 324). Women who choose not to have a child, perhaps because they are devoted to their careers or value and enjoy their life without children, may have their choices deemed selfish, abnormal, or unnatural by those around them (Ireland 123). In this regard, we can observe societal insinuations that a mother role should be a woman's top priority in life and that women should be willing to sacrifice, whether it be their careers, their bodies, or their leisure time, for children.

An Inconceivable Mistake

Winter 2012, second year of my PhD, age twenty-nine

I'm always so careful, but lately school, work, and life has kept me rather preoccupied. I've been having trouble remembering what day it is or what I ate yesterday for dinner, so forgetting to take my birth control pill seems pretty inevitable. Let's face it: mistakes happen, women miss pills. But I happened to miss two pills ... the first two pills in my month pack (a particularly risky mistake, going by the medication's information insert). "Don't beat yourself up about it", I tell myself soothingly, "you live in an age where fixing this issue can be as easy as a trip to the drug store." This is also what the Plan B (or morning after pill) website tells me, as I scroll through the pages of "judgment-free" information. I use the website's effectiveness calculator, which involves plugging in the exact number of hours that have elapsed since the fateful deed was committed without birth control. With the click of a button, I am provided with an estimate of the likelihood that two teeny white morning after pills will prevent my journey into parenthood. The website's pages are filled with pictures of women, some looking worried, some smiling in a way that doesn't make sense to me, given the circumstances. I don't want to be in this situation; I don't want to have to make these types of decisions, don't want to be rolling the dice with regard to Plan B's effectiveness. After consulting with a less than helpful pharmacy technician over the phone, I grab my purse and with my keys in my hand I say to Dave:

Me: "Okay, so I'm not going to take any chances. I'm going to walk down to the pharmacy and get the morning after pill."

Dave doesn't say anything, presumably processing the information.

Dave: "Do you think that is really necessary?"

Me (rather emphatically): "YES, yes it's necessary."

I know better than to get upset at his question. I know that Dave is simply trying to establish whether I am being overly fearful about the whole situation, something that is not unheard of for me. Over the years, Dave has grown quite accustomed, I'm sure, to my monthly worries in the days leading up to my period; a time when my fears of accidentally becoming pregnant are at their height. Standing in front of him now, I feel a sense of shame. I feel like I have been reckless with my body. I worry that my preoccupation with the whirlwind of graduate school now has the ability to impact not only my life, my academic career, my future, but also his. He trusts me to take care of this aspect of our lives. Now, I feel like I have let him down. "Will you come with me?" I ask, knowing that I need him, in this moment, to acknowledge that I am scared, that I am sorry, and that I am doing something to try and fix this tiny, yet significant error. Without saying a word, he grabs his coat and we are out the door.

In a society where a woman's duty is to procreate, it seems reasonable to assume that the responsibility of timing a pregnancy appropriately will likely (and, I would argue, unfairly) also fall on the shoulders of women. Since 2008, Canadian women have been afforded greater agency in their decisions about when, whether, and with whom to have children through the legalization of over-the-counter sales of the morning after pill (Eggertson 1645). Unfortunately, such an emotionally taxing decision can prove particularly difficult for women as they are more likely to face ridicule and stigmatization about their choices (i.e., they should have been more careful with their birth control or have abstained from sex) or the events in their lives that would necessitate the use of emergency contraception in the first place (Free, Lee, and Ogden 2; Shoveler, Chabot, Soon, and Levine 15).

For many couples, decisions related to the possibility of becoming parents can be fraught with stress as it is not always assured that couples will agree on exactly when, or even if, they should have children (Rosina and Testa 496). The emotions that may impact these decisions can certainly intensify if one, or both, partners are students. For some student parents, entry into family life may be unplanned and will likely necessitate life changes that individuals may not find welcome (i.e., taking time off from school or work; taking on additional paid employment; changes to accommodations). In such circumstances, the adjustment to parenthood might be a rocky one or may not necessarily occur at all (i.e., individuals may choose to abort a fetus; put a child up for

adoption; abandon a child with the other parent) (Moltz; Ellis and Bochner 99; Zhou et al. 3).

Maybe Baby?

Spring, 2012, second year of my PhD, age twenty-nine

It's been over a month since I took Plan B and there is still no sign of my period. The package insert had said that I could expect my menstrual cycle to be a disrupted, but that I might want to take a home pregnancy test if it doesn't come at all. I can't wait any longer. The walk to the pharmacy is a frigid one, as Dave grumbles about a project at work and I chug a bottle of water, hoping that it will allow me to pee on command. In the dimly lit aisle of the store, we both stare, puzzled, at the selection of pregnancy tests, our heads cocked slightly sideways. Do I need a digital stick... why on earth would the thing need to be digitized? A family pack of six tests? Nope, one should do it. We decide on the store brand test that is on sale... heck, they sell these things at the dollar store now, so how complicated can they really be? When we arrive home, Dave starts dinner while I dart into the washroom. I rip apart the box and diligently follow the test instructions, holding the stick in my stream of urine for the required five seconds. As I count ... one one thousand ... two one thousand ... three one thousand, a peculiar calm washes over me. Suddenly, I find myself feeling okay with whatever the test might say. I set the timer on the stove and Dave and I engage in some distracting chit-chat while the pasta boils and wait for the results to appear. I glance around the apartment, wondering if it could accommodate a baby. There would be room for a crib in our bedroom if we got rid of a bookcase, but then again, we could always move to a slightly larger place. I also start to think about whether I would have time for a baby at this point in my life. My classes will be over in a few months, and the flexibility in my academic schedule over the coming years might allow me to be at home more frequently with a child. Suddenly, the concept of a baby is not unnerving me in the way it always has. Though unplanned, a baby might not be the end of the world right now. It could, in fact, be the beginning of a whole new one. As the timer on the stove beeps, I sense that my biological clock may be letting me know that it's time as well. I cautiously head back to the bathroom and swear that I can smell a hint of baby shampoo in the air. I peer down at the test. Negative. Part of me is relieved by this knowledge, and it is this part that I share with Dave. Secretly, however, I am disappointed.

Given that the average age of doctoral graduates in Canada has been estimated to be between thirty-three and thirty-six years of age (Maldonado, Wiggers, and Arnold 14), the fact remains that graduate school may be the time, or perhaps even the *right* time, for many individuals to start or grow their families. From the perspective of some women, notably Kathryn Lynch, a professor of English at Wellesley College (Massachusetts) who chose to become a mother during

graduate school, “graduate studies can spin for years in a hazy orbit of delayed gratification and responsibility. But the fantasy that real life waits just around the next bend is especially dangerous for young women. Reproductively, the future is here now” (3). Unfortunately, some student couples may be discouraged from pursuing this area of their lives by a lack of support, either on the part of supervisors, departments, or university administrations. I have often wondered if the reason I have even contemplated becoming a parent during my studies has had anything to do with the fact that I am enrolled at a university with policies in place to assist its graduate student parents. Specifically, my institution offers a parental leave bursary that entitles graduate students up to eight months of paid parental leave that can equal as much as 95 percent of a student’s regular funding. Additionally, my university also offers bursaries to financially support on-site daycare for graduate student families when they return to their studies. Although these resources can offer tremendous support to students, they unfortunately do not appear to be common within universities across the country (Allen).

Finally, I feel it important to acknowledge the evidence that suggests that babies and graduate studies are concepts that can successfully coexist in women’s lives. Several published studies have found that female academic mothers report increased time management skills and an improved level of focus with regard to their work following the birth of their children (Lynch; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 249). Many of these women attribute their need to schedule their work around the sleeping and care schedules of their children as being the primary motivator for such changes. In this case, the flexible work schedules afforded to many in the academy (particularly during graduate training) may also serve as a support for academic parents and their families.

Conclusion

Since I began writing this narrative three years ago, I have stopped taking my birth control pills. This decision has not been motivated by a desire on my part to become pregnant immediately, but was instead intended to provide my body with a break from the decade of various forms of chemical birth control. In some peculiar way, this decision has helped to ease much of the paranoia that I have always attached to the possibility of becoming pregnant. Dave and I remain happily committed to each other and satisfied with our current statuses academically; however, we have actively decided to delay starting a family. Despite us very much wanting to become parents someday, our graduate training remains an exceptionally demanding component of our lives that we would like to complete before taking on the duty of parenthood. Occasionally, we find ourselves engaged in the baby conversation—which typically consists

of me asking, “Do you think we should have a baby,” to which Dave usually responds, “I don’t know, do YOU think we should have a baby?”—however, neither one of us has come up with a definitive answer to the question of when. Perhaps postdoctoral training may prove to be a more conceivable time for us to consider having children.

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Experiments in Voice and Visibility

Creating Space for Graduate Student (Single) Mothers in the Mother-Free Space of the Academy

In my doctoral department, the invisibility of my situation as a single mother and the way it was so often at odds with academic culture left me feeling alienated from my peers and my community. In an effort to balance school and single motherhood, to make visible the reality of my situation, and to connect more deeply with my academic community, I begin a series of research experiments in voice and visibility. These projects often involved my son, as he was an inextricable part of my situation as a mother. Moreover, his life and our relationship were undoubtedly impacted by “my situation” as a graduate student. In this essay, I discuss a few experiments in voice and visibility that were instrumental to getting through my doctoral program. These projects involved risk, creative strategies, and lots and lots of support from other members of my community. I hope sharing these stories might inspire other graduate student mothers to push through even when it feels impossible. Likewise, I hope faculty members and graduate students will be inspired to support and empower the mothers in their respective departments.

When my eleven-year-old son, Benjamin, and I relocated across the country so that I could pursue a doctoral degree in communication, I knew that it was going to be difficult. I had just completed my master’s degree while single parenting, so I felt that I knew what was in store for me logistically: lots of sleepless nights, tricky scheduling, childcare negotiations, and life on a shoe-string budget. It would be tough, but I was convinced that I could do it. I was fully funded as a doctoral fellow, Benjamin was on the waitlist for an excellent school, and my department seemed very supportive. But by the end of my first semester, I was convinced that I’d made a huge mistake. My funding was not enough to cover all of our expenses, and I would have to adjunct extra classes

so that we could make it—this would mean less time with Ben and more strain on our schedule. I'd had to forfeit participation in major conferences because I was unable to arrange childcare while I travelled and/or was unable to afford to take my son with me; and, meanwhile, Benjamin's academic performance plummeted as he struggled with homesickness for the family we'd left behind.

As for my department, although it was widely known that I was a single mother, I got the impression that most people did not really understand what that meant; they could not really *see* what that meant. The complexities and nuances of the actual relationship and the socio-economic and temporal implications of that position were not visible to them. There was a disconnect when I tried to explain to my colleagues, the majority of whom were not parents, what it meant to move through graduate school as a single mother. In her book *The Mask of Motherhood*, maternal scholar Susan Maushart explains that “the realities of parenthood and especially motherhood are kept carefully shrouded in silence, disinformation, and outright lies” (5). According to Maushart, the silence that surrounds the day-to-day realities of motherhood creates a divide between parents and non-parents. I felt that divide, but there was something more....

It was as though there had been a willingness to accept my single mother status at a superficial level, maybe even commend me for my efforts, but there was the expectation that certain matters should simply remain private, i.e., invisible, and that I should spare others from thinking about what the doing and living of life might actually be like for me and for Ben. Benjamin was with me on campus frequently because childcare was not readily available in the evenings when I attended graduate seminars. He spent many hours alone, hidden away in my office where my peers and professors did not see him, nor could they possibly see that while I sat with them in class, was physically present, I was mentally focused elsewhere—constantly worrying about what this child was doing alone in my office. Was he finishing his homework? Was he eating the dinner that I'd supplied for him? Was he bored out of his mind? Lonely? Safe? Scared?

Research indicates that my experience is not uncommon. Huff, Hampson, and Tagliarina argue that academic departments foster cultures that encourage a public-private split; consequently, they show that the student mothers in their study were often worried about how their departments would react if their motherhood “became too public” (446). In a 2008 case study, Lynch found that other student mothers often feel pressure to enact what they refer to as a “strategy of ‘maternal invisibility’” in order to “appear to be ‘just students,’ preserving a cultural form in which a graduate student is 100% committed to their work” (596). Benjamin and I were not separated from this community merely by the shroud of silence that surrounds motherhood as a whole but by the cloak of invisibility that maintains the academy as a mother-free space:

a culture that “demands freedom *from* mothers”; a place where “women who are primary caregivers to children are omitted, excluded, limited and/or constrained as a presence” via various formal and informal processes that typically involve silencing, making invisible, or otherwise penalizing women who are mothers (Cunningham, *Love* 182, emphasis original). The absence, silence, and invisibility of mothers in the academy has ethical as well as epistemological implications, as Huff, Hampson, and Tagliarina point out:

the experiences of mothers are fundamentally important to the mission of academia. Academia plays an important role in knowledge production and influences larger understanding of the world and individual’s lives. If the class of knowledge producers is limited to those who are not parents, the knowledge produced may not take into account the full nature of relationships in the world. (457-58)

In my department, the invisibility of our particular life situation and the way my single motherhood was so often at odds with academic culture left me feeling alienated from my peers and my community. Professionally and personally, I longed to feel a connection with my peers, and I thought that this would not be possible unless they really saw us and our circumstances and understood them. Politically, I could see from my standpoint the inequity inherent in the academic system and wanted to devote my scholarship to changing those circumstances for myself and other mothers. Pragmatically, I needed a way to integrate my graduate work with my daily life to find a way to attend to all of my responsibilities. The culmination of these desires inspired me to begin a series of research experiments in voice and visibility. These projects often involved my son as he was an inextricable part of my situation as a mother. Moreover, his life and our relationship were undoubtedly impacted by “my situation” as a graduate student. Thus I strongly believed his circumstances merited visibility and voice as well.

Experiments in Voice and Visibility

#1 – A Single Mom and her Child Coresearcher

One of the more impactful forays into voice and visibility was actually a tangential outcome of a different research project that ended up opening the door to future projects, conversation, and community-building within my department. I was taking a qualitative research methods class during the second semester of my doctoral program. As a semester project, I decided to design and pilot a qualitative interviewing study that would focus on the relational and everyday experiences of graduate student single mothers and their children.

I hoped it might become my dissertation. The unusual aspect of this project was that I invited Benjamin to be my coresearcher. I was worried that I might have problems getting my professor to sign off on the project and even more worried about getting it through our institutional review board (IRB), but to my surprise and delight the study was approved on both counts. The research aims and overview were as follows:

Objective. To gain insight into the lived experiences of graduate student single mothers and their children; to provide my son, Benjamin, a formal opportunity to engage in a collaborative project as my coresearcher; and to discover the limits and possibilities inherent in both of these life experiences.

Research Questions:

- How does the experience of single mothering while completing an advanced degree impact the mother-child relationship?
- How does the experience of single mothering while completing an advanced degree impact one's scholarship and academic responsibilities?
- How do children perceive their mothers' academic pursuits?
- What types of challenges (economic, relational, time-management etc.) do single graduate student moms and children face and how do they negotiate them?
- What are the costs and benefits of this experience?

I asked Benjamin to be my coresearcher for several reasons. First, as I mentioned above, whether visible or not, Benjamin, was almost always present while I was conducting and writing my research. Given the fact that this project was in so many ways about his life, it seemed remiss not to formally acknowledge his presence and seemed natural to invite his participation. My pursuit of a graduate degree had consequences for him, although at the time he was not often given a forum to voice those experiences, particularly in academic settings. I wanted to create a space for that. Finally, graduate school and (single) motherhood are most often mutually exclusive endeavors; this mutual exclusivity is part of the problem. I was attempting, with this project, to bring the two endeavours closer together. Whether or not it is a good decision to merge these two aspects of life is still up for debate, but the practical reasons for needing to do so outweighed the luxury of deciding whether or not I wanted my family life to become enmeshed in my research and vice versa.

Benjamin and I worked on this project together over the course of the semester: developing interview guides, conducting interviews, video blogging, and more. Each week, I would go to my methods class to discuss the course

readings from that week, and then the second half of the class was typically designated for class members to share the progress of our projects. Every week when the time came for the research-sharing portion of the class, I would ask my professor if Benjamin could join our discussion since he was my coresearcher, and each time the professor agreed. At first, it felt awkward to me; I was very aware of the presence of a child, my child, and I could only imagine what the other students must have been thinking. In actuality, at least outwardly, everyone was supportive and welcoming. By the end of the semester, Ben was practically a regular part of the class.

One evening near the end of the term while on our way home after class Benjamin and I began discussing the way we would represent the findings from our study in the end-of-semester project presentation. Benjamin was horrified at the idea that we would have to write a paper about our study and stressed out about the prospect of trying to deliver a conventional academic presentation in front of a bunch of grownups. I told him that we didn't have to present our research in a traditional format. If he had other ideas, I was open to them, and I felt that my instructor would also be flexible. He sat in silence the rest of the way home. Then, shortly after walking through the door he began improvising a monologue about how to be a graduate student. It was satirical, witty, and poignant. It was *his* voice. He told me more about his perceptions and feelings in that instance than he ever did in any of our meetings, interviews, or video blogs. He eventually developed his improvisation into a performance and delivered it to undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members at an annual departmental communication event. I soon realized that the things that were happening around and outside of the formal research project were as interesting and important as the project itself in terms of creating visibility and conversation around issues of academic motherhood. As part of our project presentation, in addition to our original research questions, we asked the class and professor to consider the following questions:

- How does single mothering while completing an advanced degree impact the university?
- How does it impact the graduate and academic community? How might it?
- How can admitting single mothers and children into an academic community or into a graduate program enhance the scholarly experiences of that community?
- How do administrators, colleagues, faculty, and staff respond to us?
- What do we bring?
- How can we become part of the community and how can our presence here effect change?

Undertaking this project in a classroom setting provided the opportunity for others to interact with us while learning about what our life was like, and Benjamin and I suddenly became more visible to our community. The conversations that resulted from our presence in this class shed light on the relational aspects of mothering, provided an opening for conversations about the constraints faced by graduate student mothers and problematic structural practices of the academy, and ultimately created a small space for this graduate student mother and her child in the mother-free space of the academy. Moreover, as a result of Benjamin's public performance "How to Be a Graduate Student" he was invited by another professor in our department to participate in a performance art class that led to our next collaborative experiment in voice and visibility.

#2 – Open House Performance

The semester immediately following the qualitative methods class, in which Benjamin and I conducted our exploratory single-moms-and-children project, I enrolled in a performance art class with Benjamin. This was a graduate level class offered in the Department of Communication at my university. I say that I enrolled in the class with him because he was actually invited and scheduled to participate in the class long before my formal enrollment. In reality, I enrolled because I wanted to do more collaborative research projects with my son, and this class was a means for us to explore alternate modes and methods of inquiry together.

Inspired by some of the reading and performances on "the everyday" that we'd studied in our class, I had an idea for a performance that would focus on my and Benjamin's everyday life. On the day of our in class performance, Benjamin and I displayed a slideshow of our home that contained pictures of the inside and outside of our house that he had taken the week prior. Some images showed us going about our everyday home activities. Some of the pictures showed our clutter and our mess. At the end of our slideshow presentation, we divided our performance art class into four small groups and gave each an envelope containing an invitation to our "open house" and a key to our home. Class members were instructed that our house would be open for one full week and they were free to drop by anytime, with or without calling ahead. An excerpt from the artist statement provides a bit more insight into the performance:

This performance is about the everyday, the mundane and the not so mundane, creation, chance, invitation, reversal, participation, collaboration, home, public/private, community, borders/boundaries, space, risk, vulnerability, interruption, and life. Our life. And maybe yours, also.

For Benjamin, this is an opportunity for our peers to see into our everyday, to see what our life is like right now, and maybe that will give them a better idea as to who we are as human beings in our society.

For Summer, this is also an opportunity to extend her current interests with regard to the intersection of (single)motherhood and academia. Although much of her (and Ben's) everyday lived experiences happen at USF, there is much in life that doesn't happen there. A large portion of our lives are lived in our homes (Cunningham, "Open House").

A major motivation behind this project was the idea that while seeing us at school made our life visible to our community in certain ways, lives aren't lived solely inside the walls of the university. If we wanted people to have a better understanding of what our life was like, we would need them to see other parts. As you can see from the artist's statement, however, the thrust was not only about making the private public or making the unseen visible, it was about trying to connect to our community.

Over the course of the week, some class members came and others didn't. Some people announced their visits, and others didn't. A favourite moment for both of us was when we arrived home one day after school and running errands. After the initial shock of walking through the door to find a group of people in our home painting the wall bright blue, we were delighted that David from our class along with his partner and our professor along with her partner and daughter all came to our event and were working hard to make our house beautiful. After the painting was finished, our professor and her family brought over their dinner to share with us. The surprise of finding these guests painting our walls on a rainy day brightened and warmed our home, both literally and figuratively. Both acts—the painting of the wall and the sharing of the meal—made us feel cared for and connected to our academic community. From that day, each time we walked into our house the first thing we would see was our beautiful blue wall; it became a constant reminder of our friends, membership to, and connection with this community. When we eventually moved from that home, we had a sample of the blue paint colour matched at the hardware store. We painted the kitchen of our new home the same colour—the colour that feels like connection and home to us and the colour that reminds us of one of our first experiences of being accepted and seen within this particular community.

In the end, about half of the members of our class attended our open house. Several of the class members who did not attend offered apologies and excuses for not coming. Many said they were too busy. Some people expressed regret at

not being able to come, and their remorse seemed sincere as though they had really wanted to attend. Others who made excuses about not attending seemed to be offering them for reasons connected to obligation and guilt. It was as if by creating this open house as a performance within the frame of an academic class, we created a sense of obligation for people to attend that they might not have felt had we simply held an open house as a social event. People, whether they truly wanted to visit with us or not, felt as if there had been an expectation for them to do so. This sense of obligation reminded me of the way I had felt so often with regard to academic events. So many times there were academic events that I had wanted, and arguably needed, to participate in, but could not due to my home/family situation. In this sense, our performance effected a reversal in a way that I had not anticipated. This reversal became a point of conversation when we debriefed the performance the following week in class. The performance itself became a significant building block to creating a real space for Benjamin and me within my academic community.

#3 – “Mom’s School” by Ben: An Email Exchange

Not all of my experiments in voice and visibility were formal research or performance projects. Some of them were simply little moments, impromptu conversations. Although these conversations about motherhood and academe were often in response to formal projects, others were reactions to informal kinds of activism and resistance such as the day-to-day decisions I made within my department to make my (single) motherhood visible, which often meant making my son, Benjamin, visible as well. In what follows, I share a conversation that highlights how making motherhood visible can open opportunities for difficult conversations that actually resulted in raising consciousness. These conversations cannot happen when mothers are silenced and motherhood is made invisible.

“Mom’s School” was a serial comic strip that Benjamin created and distributed during the time we were taking the performance art class together. It was mainly a commentary on my neglectful behaviour, which resulted from my preoccupation with graduate school duties, and also a commentary on the consuming demands of academe from the perspective of a child. The strip was funny, critical, and sometimes hard for me to read because it highlighted the loneliness and alienation that Benjamin experienced in his daily life as an only child of a single graduate student mother. Each week he would create a new strip and go to the copy machine in the Department of Communication to make duplicates that he would then distribute to faculty and graduate student mailboxes. I also hung the originals outside of my office door. Benjamin’s comic definitely caught people’s attention, although not everyone was a fan, as evidenced in the following email exchange:

Summer,

Thanks for the email. I just wanted to chat with you about ben's comic book. I think it's great he's putting one together, and I like seeing them [sic] outside your office on display. Could I just respectfully ask that he not put a photocopy in my mailbox? Like i [sic] said, I think it's a great idea and a great way for him to work on navigating between kid-life and university, but I don't have a lot of use for them outside their momentary enjoyment. They tend to find their way to the recycle bin instead of being kept for posterity. I don't want to be a jerk about it, but I'd be grateful to save the extra tree and see them posted outside of your office.

Thanks for understanding.

[Name Omitted]

The sender was a colleague of mine whom I knew Benjamin considered a personal friend, and he would have been crushed had he heard these comments from her directly. I imagine she knew this to be the case, which is why she probably decided to ask me to handle the situation in a way that would disguise the true origin of the request. I was frustrated by the situation and I could not respond right away. I did not feel it was fair of her to ask me to intervene with Benjamin in this matter and felt that if she would have had to address him face to face, she might have reconsidered what it was she was really asking him to do and what she was asking me to do. After spending some time thinking through the implications of her request, I responded with the following email:

Hi [Name Omitted],

I appreciate you coming to me with this concern, and I also appreciate your thoughtful consideration of Ben's comic and the motivations behind it. I spent a good part of last night and this morning giving your communication the same considerate reflection while simultaneously considering what it would mean to ask Benjamin to stop distributing his comics. I've decided I'm not going to ask him to do so, and I'll tell you why. Let me start by saying that, though I realize you are making a personal request, my decision is really not about you personally, [name omitted]. Accordingly, I mean no disrespect to you, personally, in my refusal. Ultimately, my decision is rooted in ethical and political reasons. Benjamin does spend a great deal of his time on campus negotiating his position in this space where he often feels out of place and, at times, unwelcome. Regardless, he has no choice in the matter. He is here whether he wants to be or not, and

most often has little voice or room for expression in the very world that makes up such a large part of his present life. I think he has found some agency in this comic, not just in the making of it, but in the way he has chosen to display and distribute it. He considers it a communicative performance, and he is systematic about the way he distributes it. It announces his presence in his own voice to people who see him, to people who don't, and to people who don't want to. I don't believe this kind of communicative, agentic act should be regulated, stifled, or silenced. In fact, I think to do so would be unethical. Given these reasons, I cannot and will not ask him to stop putting them in people's boxes.

However, there is certainly no expectation for you to keep them for posterity. I don't think that's the point. I sincerely hope you didn't/don't feel that obligation, and if you did feel so because you and Ben know each other in a personal, friendly way, please let me alleviate that expectation. What you do with the mail in your box just as what you do with any communication you receive is up to you. How you choose to interpret the communication—whether you choose to ignore, reflect, enjoy, or remain indifferent—that is your right as receiver. If they get recycled or even trashed, that says something, too. And, well, I think that's the risk we all take when trying to be heard, though for some of us the risks are higher and opportunities fewer.

Thanks for your consideration,
[Name Omitted]

The idea that motherhood and its products (mothers and children) should be contained within the private space of the relationship and within the private sphere of the home is a common expectation upheld within the mother-free space of the academy. We could read this email exchange as an example of an unwelcome spillage of the private sphere into the public sphere, a threat to the mother-free expectations of the academy. We could read my colleague's email to me as an attempt to police this child-free/mother-free zone and assert her right to be free from mothers and children. However, her final response shows that she was open to considering the situation from my perspective, and although this interaction was difficult, it seems as if she herself walked away with a different perspective:

Summer,
Thanks for getting back to me on this. I fully understand your position and respect your decision. In fact, were I in your place, I can't

say I'd make a different decision. You want to do what's best for Ben and help him feel empowered in a space where he's out of place. I'll continue to get a chuckle out of them when they find their way in my mailbox and then add them to the recycle pile. No harm, no foul. Thanks again,
[Name Omitted]

My goal in all of these experiments in voice and visibility was to make our life as single mom and child more visible to those around me so that people would not look at me or other mothers and think "oh, she's a graduate student and a single mom" without knowing and without seeing what that really means. Motherhood is a relational form of personhood, and single motherhood in particular does not often provide for the kind of autonomy that people without children so often take for granted. I wanted people to see and to know Benjamin and to begin to understand what this experience means to him. My goal was also for Benjamin to see academe and school in a new way, to understand the opportunities here, and to understand why this part of my life is also so important. And, my ultimate goal was, and is still, to make graduate education more accessible for non-traditional students, particularly women like me.

Conclusion

All the experiments herein have their limits in terms of voice and visibility. Alone, they could not foster the kind of change needed in the academy to move it from a mother-free to a mother-friendly space. However, at my doctoral institution, these experiments succeeded in raising consciousness and provoking conversations among faculty and other members of the academy community who might not have otherwise even participated in such discussions. I also believe many of these experiments paved the way for my son and me to be truly seen and welcomed in our community; they facilitated our membership and belonging.

During my time as a graduate student single mother, I had lots of conversations in lots of different ways aimed at making the academy a mother-friendly space. I published and presented scholarly essays and worked with the administration at my doctoral institution to support programs for graduate student mothers. I had difficult one-on-one conversations with people I know and with strangers. I have talked to people from my head and my heart, but that is not all.

As a single mom, I have also shown up to places where I wasn't supposed to with a kid. I performed my motherhood, my single motherhood, openly, strategically, thoughtfully, and sometimes desperately. Sometimes I did this to make a point; sometimes because I simply had no choice. But I wasn't performing alone. Just as I supported and empowered my son, in the examples

of voice and visibility, to have presence in the academic contexts where he was expected to remain silent and invisible, others supported and empowered me to be visible as a mother in my academic community and other academic environments where maternity was expected to remain invisible. For example, professors sometimes let me show up to class with my kid or leave their class early to get him from school. And the support went beyond helping me to be a mother; my department helped me to be a successful graduate student. Colleagues sometimes went to get Ben from school so I could be somewhere else. Other people performed caregiving with me, or for me, and Benjamin, in ways that allowed me to perform my identity as something other than mother (if only for a moment). I think my visibility as a single mother, so often with Ben in tow, served a part in making some transformative moments. However, I also think it's important to make visible the kinds of work that others did to make our academic community a more mother-friendly place; creating opportunities for graduate student mothers in the academy and dismantling the mother-free space will require the effort and participation of many, not just of mothers. In my situation, relational acts and support from my community are what made the impossible possible. Last December, I graduated with my PhD, not just because of my efforts but because of the support of an academic community that empowered me to do so.

Ensuring that graduate student mothers are able to successfully complete their programs is an important aspect to creating a diverse academy. Literature on academic motherhood emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the circumstances of graduate students in particular because “doctoral student years typically fall during prime family formation and childbearing years” (Mason, Goulden, and Frasch); however, since graduate students are not faculty, they often do not have access to the same kinds of formal institutional and policy supports such as maternity leave and access to healthcare, which adds to the precarity of their situation (Springer, Parker, and Leviten-Reid; Lynch). For this reason, recommendations for change often emphasize the need for institutions and departments to formalize policies such as paid parental leave for graduate students (Goulden, Mason, and Frasch) and to create structural support such as on-site childcare (Lynch).

Nevertheless, other scholarship argues that policy alone is not enough; Spring, Parker, and Leviten-Reid as well as Huff, Hampson, and Tagliarina show that when institutions had policies and/or supports in place for graduate students, department faculty, and students themselves were unaware of them or were afraid to use them because they were part of organizational and departmental cultures that penalized or otherwise stigmatized academic motherhood. Wyatt-Nichol, Cardona, and Drake assert in a recent essay on work-life balance for academic mothers, “policies designed to eliminate or minimize structural

inequality will only be effective through supportive organizational cultures” (109). The experiments in voice and visibility that I’ve shared herein were attempts to engender conversations that might facilitate such cultural change within academic departments.

Creating mother-friendly academic cultures is a key component to supporting and empowering academic mothers, particularly graduate student mothers. While a focus on policy is an important component to developing that culture, it is not the only component of a supportive academic culture. Even if, and where, such formal support is available, graduate students mothers, particularly single mothers, will need more than formal kinds of support if they are to feel empowered to complete their programs; they will need to feel included and welcome as mothers in their academic communities; they are also likely to need pragmatic and political support from faculty and their peers. These kinds of support are contingent on the participation of other members of the academic community; garnering such support will require conversation and consciousness raising so that members of the academic community who are not mothers will understand how they are stakeholders in this issue. Such conversations do not, will not, and cannot happen as long as issues of maternity are made silent and invisible. Changing academic culture from a mother-free space to a mother-friendly space in the long-term and creating the necessary supports for graduate student mothers in the interim will require effort, risk, creativity, and participation from a larger contingent of the academic community. So how do we do it? I leave you with the answers that Benjamin and I gave to the research questions from our collaborative interviewing project:

The answers to these questions aren’t found in a percentage of statistical significance nor are they grounded in the data of a transcript. We are here. We want you to see and feel our presence fully. Our doing, our being, our becoming cannot be reduced to the ink on the page of a family-friendly policy; we cannot be bound up in the pages of a scholarly journal article. This project is more than what is to be found in data, and the answers to our research questions are only to be found in what we all create.

Coda

On the first day of the fall semester, just a couple of weeks ago, a student from my *Women and Communication* course approached me after class. She explained that she was the single mother of a first grader with special needs. She told me that she did not plan to miss any class, but realistically knew it was likely that she would probably need to leave early or be absent at some point to attend

meetings or appointments connected to her son. “No problem,” I told her, “I appreciate that you are letting me know up front. Just keep the lines of communication open and we’ll be fine.” She thanked me for being so understanding. I explained that I’d been through my undergraduate and graduate programs as a single mom and that I understood. She smiled and left.

The following week she stayed after again. She said, “I’m finally putting it together.”

“What?” I asked, assuming she meant she was making connections between the Beauvoir essay from last week and the Lorde and hooks readings that we were discussing this week.

“You are the instructor I heard about,” she explained, “the one who shows up with her kid, whose research is about motherhood and higher education. I was taking another communication class several semesters ago and a student told me about you. They suggested I take a class with you. I didn’t realize I was in *your* women and com. class this semester. That explains why you were so understanding about my son.”

She went on, “I am so excited to be in your class. Do you know I am in the process of applying to graduate school right now? Being in your class, knowing you, makes me feel like I can do it.”

One year after completing my PhD, I am currently a visiting instructor in the same department where I conducted my experiments in voice and visibility. My son is a senior in high school. He rarely accompanies me to campus or departmental events anymore mainly because he doesn’t have to and he is interested in other things. Now instead of department members glancing at me sideways because I brought my kid to an adult space or professional event, professors and graduate students ask, “Where is Ben?” They seem disappointed not to see him. Colleagues email me for professional guidance or advice when they are doing research connected to mothering and motherhood; colleagues also email me or seek out my personal advice about doing work-balance in academe as a mother. I’m not sure that any of this is a sign of the entire culture of a program changing, but there was a shift that felt palpable to me after I began my experiments. At first I feared making my motherhood open, it felt like something I should hide; by the end of my program it was welcome—Ben and I were both welcome. I can also see by the comments from my students and colleagues that these experiments made a mark beyond me: in many ways, my presence—my continued presence—makes the academy a little less mother free.

By and large, academe is still very much a mother-free space. I was fortunate that making my motherhood visible resulted in such a positive response; other student mothers might not have the same experience. That is why now, as a faculty member, it is so important that I continue to advocate for formal policy changes that will make higher education more accessible to (single) mothers,

but also that I do what I can in the interim—because policies and academic cultures don't change over night—to support and encourage the mothers who are in my classes, in my department, and at my institution in the ways that my peers and professors supported me: by recognizing that their circumstances are different, by accommodating their needs whenever possible, and by valuing what they have to contribute. Likewise, I hope that those reading this article will consider the ways they might support and encourage the graduate student mothers in their classes and institutions to successfully navigate their programs so that together we can transform the academy from a *mother-free* to a *mother-friendly* culture.

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“It’s a Choice”

Graduate Student Mothers’ Sense of Agency in Decision-Making

Although a growing number of research universities have formal student–parent policies, many do not. Graduate student mothers attending institutions without student–parent policies must make decisions and exercise agency within this context. This work explores the sense of agency and decision making of ten graduate student mothers raising young children (under the age of five) while attending a research university without official student–parent policies. The findings demonstrate that women attempt to exercise their sense of agency by separating motherhood from school and by negotiating individual solutions to conflicts. Findings also indicate that the choices and agency exercised provide power in a temporary capacity but do not provide long-term power or control over schooling and family life. Overall, this research highlights the importance of formal policies and support for student mothers; without these policies, women’s agency and their ability to participate fully in graduate school are limited.

A growing number of research universities have adopted formal student–parent policies that graduate student mothers may access, such as maternity leave or infant daycare (Springer, Parker, and Leviten-Reid), but many others do not have formal policies even as a growing number of students have children during their years in the university. As such, graduate student mothers who attend universities without comprehensive policies must navigate the existing realities of their academic lives and motherhood. Yet, even without the benefit of formal policies, they still may exercise a sense of agency about their choices as students and mothers. This work explores the sense of agency and decision making of ten graduate student mothers raising young children (under the age of five) while attending a research university without official student–parent policies.

Theoretical Framework and Background

The combination of motherhood and graduate school creates a unique set of social, personal, and professional consequences for women (Detore-Nakamura; Gerber; Jirón-King; Springer et al.). Mason’s work shows that graduate student mothers combine both paid and unpaid work more often than graduate student fathers and childless graduate students do. Furthermore, many graduate student mothers must navigate a work-life balance without structural supports through seeking affordable and accessible high-quality daycare for infants and toddlers (Brown and Amankwaa; Medved and Heisler; Pearson), persuading clear policies about students’ pregnancy or postpartum rights (Mason and Younger), and finding family-friendly practices in the university (Brown and Nichols). Additionally, graduate student women face a reduction in faculty support once they become mothers (Spalter-Roth and Kennelly), and this reduction continues even as more student mothers appear on college campuses (Kuperberg).

Precisely because graduate school is constructed as an already-existing career—and not as preparing one for a *future* career—having children in graduate school can make one appear less serious, less committed, or less competent (Mason; Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden). Thus graduate student women who become mothers make choices within these expectations. As a result, graduate student women do not believe faculty careers at research universities are conducive to achieving work-family balance and to having a life outside of academe; instead, graduate student mothers view these choices as mutually exclusive (Mason, Goulden, and Frasch). As a result of the dominant cultural norms that prevail at research universities and the perception that graduate school is a career that does not support having a family (Long; Mason, Wolfinger and Goulden), graduate student mothers are less likely to enter research universities than graduate students without children are.

Graduate student mothers’ sense of agency and decision making around future career plans is developed in a context that does not offer comprehensive campus policies, resources, and support for families. Social scientists understand that human agency provides persons the sense of power to exercise their will over their work and life in order to create circumstances they would like (Elder), but it is not a free choice that exists outside of a person’s social, political, or cultural reality and/or barriers. Instead, agency is constructed within these existing social-structural realities, and it reflects the decisions one makes to maintain a sense of power and control over life and work (Elder; Marshall). Graduate student mothers’ further contextualize their sense of agency within the existing social expectation that all students must devote the totality of their lives to graduate school. They must make their decisions (choices) without proper student-parent policies, resources, and/or support in place.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research design with in-depth semi-structured interviews. During 2008-09, I conducted interviews with ten graduate student women enrolled in an urban midwestern research university campus. The work addresses the following central questions: 1) What influences the graduate student mother's sense of agency when combining student and mother roles; and 2) Is the graduate student mother's sense of agency influenced by a lack of student-parent policies? If so, how?

Participants

All ten women in the study were between twenty-three and thirty years old, had one or more children under the age of five years, and gave birth to a child during graduate school. Six of the women self-identified as black/African American and four self-identified as white/Caucasian. I interviewed the women only once, at a location and a time of their choice, and each interview was approximately one hour. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed in their entirety. These interviews took place as part of a larger study on the experience of university student mothers. Recruitment of participants occurred in several different ways: posting flyers in the common areas of the university campus advertising the study; giving short presentations about the study in courses and handing out flyers to all students; and sending emails to department assistants to provide information on the study to students. Initially, participants were selected via a purposive convenience sample and then via a snowball sample so the participants could recommend other qualified women to participate.

Analysis

I read each transcription in its entirety, extracting, highlighting, and coding significant statements for meanings, before clustering them into themes. I used a constant comparative method to code the data into major themes as each interview was transcribed (Corbin and Strauss; Glaser and Strauss). I strengthened the thematic coding by having research colleagues read over the transcripts and codes and provide feedback to cross-check my coding process. During the data collection process, I did *bracket* my own experiences through journaling, the wording of the questions and probes, and my responding to their questions. I took field notes directly on the interview guide during the interview. Moreover, because my researcher positionality during data collection was that of a graduate student and a mother, outside reviewers provided feedback on my experiences to assist me in identifying possible preconceived notions that I may have had. These actions were done to help understand the

experiences of the participants and how my own personal experiences may have impacted the data collection or analysis process. In presenting the findings in the next section, I aggregate the data to protect the participants’ identities. For example, I do not refer to their programs by name because it may inadvertently reveal who they are. Furthermore, I refer to them by pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Findings

During the interviews, the women said that motherhood should not interfere with graduate life and that they made their decisions on how to navigate school and motherhood without the help of formal policies. Although all of the women interviewed stated that they wanted to be mothers and made the choice to become mothers, they also expressed the idea that motherhood was a choice not accepted by university culture. Furthermore, while these graduate students did mention the need for support, they did not want to be perceived as different from other graduate students and/or have their motherhood status held against them in their graduate student careers. Instead, they exercised their sense of agency by making decisions to attempt to keep motherhood and school separate and to negotiate individual solutions to any conflicts that arose (e.g., planning pregnancy around the school year or hiding the maternal body).

Graduate Life: Keeping Motherhood Separate

A major finding from the interviews is the belief that graduate school is a career and a way of life, and that letting motherhood interfere with school is not an option if a graduate student mother wishes to succeed. Graduate student mothers noted that the entire culture of a college campus was geared toward childless students without outside responsibilities and that this reality impacted their decision making during pregnancy and childbirth. While pregnant, one woman said, “I felt like an alien,” noting that there were no accommodations in classrooms for pregnant students. In particular, the desks did not fit a pregnant body, and faculty members were not always receptive to understanding the physical or emotional changes that pregnancy brought about. Another student, Lisa, concurred. She noted that it was difficult to “fit into” the “horribly small seats” and that it took effort to try to “squeeze into” the desks at the end of her pregnancy. Furthermore, the negative connotations associated with pregnancy affected the students’ decisions to stay active or remove themselves from campus at the end of pregnancy. Fran explained the experience of feeling uncomfortable as a pregnant student on campus and her choice to stop attending class:

I didn't like being seen pregnant. It just, in one of the classes, it's well, you know how some of the special classes [are] half undergraduates and graduates and, like, I was the only graduate student in the class. So, it was very weird to be around undergraduates who didn't have any responsibility or anything. You know, just to know you are going to be switching to a completely different lifestyle and seeing somebody on completely the other side was just too hard.

Another woman, Rebekah, said that she responded to emails while at the hospital in labour during the birth of her fourth child. She explained how graduate school was a way of life:

Graduate life is posters, papers, presentations and work is important and it's hard to really qualify everything you do with your life." [I don't] want to be judged on that ground [being a mother], I don't want excuses made [e.g. for late work].

In Rebekah's view, graduate school as a way of life means someone cannot take time off from school without serious penalty; the culture of graduate school expects constant and consistent work. The belief that one must constantly work (even during labor, childbirth, and recovery) comes from the accepted social norm that graduate school is highly competitive and that no outside responsibilities should interfere with one's work. If she did not perform, Rebekah worried that she might lose her paid position, which provided her with funds to pay her tuition, or that she might be expelled from the program. The other women agreed with Rebekah's perspective, noting that they were in vulnerable positions as graduate students since gaining social, cultural, and economic capital was highly competitive while graduate support was limited. For these women, allowing motherhood to negatively affect their work means perhaps losing what little support they do currently have (e.g., assistantships and guidance on publications). Thus it is important for them to appear as non-mothers living the graduate student life without the outside responsibilities of childbirth or young children.

The choice to hide labour and delivery by answering emails or to hide one's body from fellow students demonstrates that a visible maternal body on campus is a non-normative body. The normative body is non-pregnant and non-maternal; it results from the social construction of the university as a place of the mind (Sutherland), geared toward childless students who can completely devote themselves to their coursework without outside distraction (West Steck). Yet, once graduate student mothers become pregnant their bodies signal that they are no longer normative. Despite the fact that the student mothers decide

when and where their maternal bodies are on display—providing them a sense of control over their changing lives and bodies—their choice replicates the social norm that pregnant students or new mothers do not belong on campus. In turn, they argue that this choice to hide their maternal limits their sense of agency because of a campus culture that does not recognize motherhood.

Individual Negotiation

As a result of the socialization process in which student mothers come to understand graduate school as a way of life, the women’s sense of agency favours decision making via individual negotiation. In part, this process is shaped not only by the reality that student mothers cannot rely on the social-structural supports of existing university policies, but also by the expectation that motherhood should not interfere with graduate school. Thus the student mothers exercise a sense agency by choosing their graduate programs, taking “off the books” maternity leaves, and scheduling childcare or breastfeeding times around their coursework. However, individual negotiation cannot create the circumstances that support decision making for the student mothers in the full meaning of agency.

Several women chose their program because they thought the courses were less time-intensive (i.e., programs without additional hours of lab work, longer on-campus time commitments or summer requirements). They sought these less time-intensive programs because they believed those programs provided a better chance to create the work-life balance that they wanted. Anna explained she chose her program because, “It would work with my family. I knew that I could work it into my current family schedule.” These women noted that programs with added on-campus requirements were difficult to maintain due to competing family commitments. Others noted that they left more intensive and accelerated tracks in their programs when they first discovered that they were pregnant or at a point later in their pregnancy. They wanted to complete their schooling *and* be attentive mothers, but they did not believe they could do this to their satisfaction in their previous track or program because of the lack of flexible options available them as student mothers. However, all of these women want to graduate and have careers; they make decisions as best as they can within the gendered nature of academe.

Without a formal policy in place, student mothers make decisions about how to access maternity leave after having children. The participants in this study did not in any case discuss possible maternity leave options with their departments because there were no formal policies in place. Instead, all of the women made decisions on their own. Their decisions included planning pregnancies around academic calendars, taking a direct study section (i.e., staying in school but completing work from home), or taking a preplanned incomplete in a course.

When I asked one woman how she handled her childbirth and leave, she stated that she received an “incomplete” as a final course grade when she gave birth, meaning she made an individual arrangement with a faculty member so that she could complete her coursework at a later date and time. This, however, meant that when she returned to graduate school after childbirth she had to complete her remaining coursework while she also completed work for her new courses, allowing little time to adjust to her concurrent roles.

Elise discussed how she planned her pregnancy “around my school schedule” because she had hoped to take the minimum amount of time off from school without negatively impacting her degree completion. She avoided *stopping-out* by giving birth to her first and only child in the summer near the end of her degree program since her graduate program did not require working over the summer. Stopping-out occurs when one interrupts her education by stopping and starting again at a later date without maintaining her standing. Other women made the choice to stop-out because no option existed for them to stay in school while on maternity leave.

Stopping-the-clock, on the other hand, gives women the opportunity to take a maternity leave and maintain standing in their programs. Donna described making this choice: “When I was pregnant with both my children, um, I needed to take a semester off after they were born.” She went on to note that this was not an ideal choice, but it did allow her to have time off with her newborn child. She wanted a maternity leave, but it was unavailable for graduate students, so she had to stop-out for a semester. Her stopping-out also caused her graduation date to be delayed, and caused her to stress over her ability to finish the program in the allotted time. Because their graduation clocks keep running, even if they are not actively taking classes, stopping-out hinders students’ ability to complete their coursework in a timely fashion: they may lose their program standing or run out of time to complete their degree. The women did state that they would have rather stayed in school, essentially stopping-the-clock, than stopping out. The choice to stop-out was not a truly free choice, and it caused a new set of challenges like worrying about finishing on time. Having a formal maternity leave or a stop-the-clock process in place would give graduate students the ability to remain in their programs without essentially stopping-out or attempting to plan a pregnancy around limited summer breaks.

After giving birth and returning to campus, student mothers encounter the new challenge of returning to school without infant childcare and breastfeeding support. The university provides daycare, although it only accepts preschool-aged children and has a limited number of available spots. However, preschool is not problematic for these women; instead they struggle to find infant and toddler options. Moreover, the majority of the women (nine of ten) did not even know there is a daycare centre on campus. Only one woman, Kyla, was aware of the

daycare option on campus. Kyla said it did not meet her needs as a graduate student because the daycare neither had extended evening hours (after 6:00 p.m.), when many classes or events were scheduled, nor accepted a variety of age groups. Consequently, because of the limited childcare options, the women noted that they made the choice to schedule their childcare around courses, and that they often worked with the kids at home. Carrie discussed how working on her graduate work from home (because of her childcare situation) was not “productive.” She tried to “set limits” for “two or three hours” on studying at home, but she noted that this was not a good solution because “[S]ome days nothing gets done. My reading doesn’t get done; taking care of my son doesn’t get done. Nothing gets done.” Other women spoke about missing classes because they had no back-up childcare available, and their children’s illnesses often caused them to fall behind in their coursework because they only had time to care for their children.

A new graduate student mother who wants to continue breastfeeding faces many challenges because of the lack of breastfeeding rooms or pumo locations available on campus. Gabby discussed trying to pump breast milk on campus, noting “I have a really hard time finding a place on campus that is private for pumping.” She tried to work out various arrangements to pump while on campus but found no arrangement that afforded her enough privacy for pumping regularly. As a result, Gabby made the choice to limit her time on campus, and this decision left her feeling disengaged in graduate student life. Gabby seemed to believe that she made the choice to limit her time freely and to maintain control over her ability to breastfeed, but in reality the inadequate options on campus for breastfeeding women made that choice for her.

Although they faced significant challenges in their efforts to continue in graduate school after becoming mothers, all of the women believed it was worth it to continue and complete their degrees. The women believed that while few family-friendly policies exist in academe, it offered more flexibility and it was more conducive to family time than other career options. This belief was based on their ability to work from home and to schedule courses or to work around their children. Flexibility, however, comes with limitations and exacts a toll. The flexible schedule and ability to work from home was premised on their lack of childcare. Additionally, all of the women made choices to divide time between family and school in ways that made them feel they never had enough time and were never able to disconnect from school because they worked from home. Furthermore, while the women did not necessarily choose to prioritize motherhood, this is nonetheless what happens when their choices surrounding graduate programs, maternity leaves, pumping options, and how to work from home are a direct consequence of the limited support systems and policies available to graduate student mothers.

University Culture, University Support, and Decision-Making

Motherhood as a choice combined with the belief that graduate school is the sole focus of a graduate student's life led many women in this sample to observe that the overall academic system did not offer much, if any, support. The women felt campus culture excludes graduate student mothers, making them discount their own power to enact long-term change on their own behalf. Individual choices become the solution to larger systemic problems. By discounting the possibility of institutional change, the women reinforced the same exclusive culture that deprived them of the fullest capacity to make decisions. Anna asked me what the purpose of this research study was and whether any policy changes would be made based on the data collected. She expressed a general interest in more programs for graduate student mothers. Yet, when asked if she thought there were policies that needed to change, Anna was unwilling to address the institutional policies that affected student mothers:

I think everyone should be treated equally whether they're a mother or not. I do think professors that have children, you know, probably without there being an official policy might be more understanding. Not sure. But I think everyone should be treated equally whether they're a mom or not. I think, it's a choice to be a mom most of the time and, um, you know, if you want to be a student and a mom then you have to juggle.

Although she stated that university-wide policies should exist to encourage student mothers' integration into the larger university population and provide them with support in a more official manner, Anna at the same time contradicted herself by putting the responsibility of balancing motherhood and school work on informal faculty relationships and the student mothers themselves. Similar to Anna, Lisa did not blame the university for not knowing about or for not dealing with her concerns as a student mother. If a woman decided to reach out for support, her options were limited. Lisa said she was directed to psychological counselling provided by the university to assist her in understanding her choices and her day-to-day experiences. She went on to explain that it was the only option offered to her when she expressed concerns to her academic counsellor about balancing her concurrent roles of mother and student. However, Lisa said that a parenting support group would be more helpful because it could connect her with other student mothers going through similar experiences, providing a better fit for her needs. But she then discounted her complaint and her discussion of potential changes on the campus for student mothers by stating:

[I] thought they [faculty and staff] would be more knowledgeable about the population of the students they have. Then I realized maybe I’m just a small percentage of students they have, and the problems I’m having with resources aren’t important.

Maria expressed a similar view that the university does not make the accommodations it should make for student mothers, but that university culture probably will not change. She held that the culture would remain the same even if the university were presented with information demonstrating that change was both needed and beneficial to student mothers and the university.

Still, the women did offer suggestions for possible accommodations: places to pump breast milk, infant and toddler on-campus daycare, flexible daycare times (evenings and weekends), better desks to accommodate the changing maternal body, official maternity leave (that protects their standing in both their program and assistantships), the ability to receive information on how to secure care for sick children, and how to receive mentorship and support from faculty. Other suggestions included peer-to-peer graduate student-parent mentors or support groups run for and by graduate student mothers, or a student parent center offering helpful advice. Nonetheless, even as they offered these suggestions, the graduate student mothers asserted that a comprehensive set of formal institutional policies and supports would never emerge. Instead, they believed that student mothers, as one woman stated, needed to continue to “figure it out” on their own, reinforcing the idea that individual solutions are the only remedy. The idea that enacting positive institutional change was impossible and that individual solutions were the only option demonstrates that (1) while the women expressed that they had made choices and exercised agency, they in fact were not able to demonstrate their full sense of agency, and (2) the choices that they made were restricted.

Conclusion

This study makes a unique contribution to our knowledge about graduate student mothers and their sense of agency in decision making about school and family life. All the women discussed how formal university policies would change their decision making process, but they did not believe positive progress would be made on the issues of student mothers. Thus they viewed that their decisions as individual choices separate from enacting campus-wide change. Still, while the choices the graduate student mothers made do not provide long-term control over their schooling and family lives, their decisions do often provide power in some temporary capacity. Changes in the existing policies and support structures—such as formal maternity

leave policy, child care on campus, and faculty mentoring design for student parents—would provide the women a greater sense of agency in decision making and more options when making decisions. Otherwise, inequality is maintained and reinforced.

As S. Williams notes, “choice” is a way to “mask economic, social, and political disparities in power” (28), and the idea that choice will create long-term positive environments for graduate student mothers on campus will not work. Instead, substantial policy, resource, and support changes must occur to make campuses an inclusive space for graduate student mothers. Without structural changes and/or new policies that address student mother issues, informal norms are subject to the discretion of authority figures, and allowances for certain groups (like student mothers) could be seen as favoritism. Moreover, these allowances could be applied inconsistently. Without a comprehensive change in university culture, the belief that student mothers can solve conflicts in school-family life via individual choice will continue.

As previous research indicates, individual choice is not a solution for systemic inequalities and may reinforce the status quo, continuing to disadvantage student mothers; systemic change therefore is required (Pearson “The Erosion of College Access”; Williams). Here, the importance of cooperative student cultures for women who are becoming, or already are, mothers needs to be stressed to reduce and to alter the overreliance on individual solutions and to improve the sense of agency women have in their decision making. If women do not have access to formal policy, resources, and support designed for student mothers, we will continue to see student mothers who stop-out of their degree programs, effectively pushing them out (Correll, Benard, and Paik; Peskowitz; Stone; Springer et al.; Williams, Manvell, and Bornstein). The more that women, families, researchers, workplaces, and educational institutions understand about what these women are experiencing as student mothers, the more effective we will all be in developing the necessary tools needed to help student mothers accomplish their goals, allowing them a fuller sense of agency in their decision making.

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BARBARA A.W. EVERSOLE, CINDY L. CROWDER, SIHAM LEKCHIRI,
AMBER CLARK AND TONI S. ZIMMERMAN

Mothering and Professing in the Ivory Tower

Supporting Graduate Student Mothers

Women interested in becoming professors and mothers are often unsure of the best time to start their families. Many women decide to become mothers in graduate school. This article discusses the landscape for graduate students who decide to become mothers (GSMs) while still in school. There are several obstacles for GSMs who wish to become tenured faculty members. Institutional obstacles include the notion of ideal workers and ideal careers, which do not include the option of motherhood and often conflict with the notion of the ideal mother. Another obstacle is institutional gender biases and assumptions about women, such as the bias against caregiving. Women of any age are assumed to be responsible for caregiving of children and/or elders. Finally, women lack their own individual agency and do not have family support to be able to be successful. GSMs can employ various strategies to overcome these obstacles. Strategies can include institutional change strategies, department support, individual agency, and family support. Obstacles and strategies are illustrated through personal vignettes from the authors' own experiences: three authors are tenured with children, and two have infants and are GSMs. Two authors are or have been chairs of dissertation committees. Recommendations for institutions are offered that can support GSMs in their efforts to be successful at mothering and professing in the ivory tower. The presented arguments make it clear that the mothering viewpoint is sorely needed in the academy, and that GSMs need support from all stakeholders in order to be successful.

Numerous studies have documented gender inequality in academe and the high cost to individuals trying to combine families with academic careers (Armenti, 65-83; Bailyn 137-153; Holm, Prosek, and Weisberger, 2; Lynch, 585; Trepal, Stinkchfield, and Haiyasoso, 30). It is no wonder that at nearly every stage of

their careers, women leave academe at disproportionately higher rates than men (Mason, Stacy, and Goulden). “Rather than blatant discrimination against women, it is the long work hours and the required travel, precisely at the time when most women with advanced degrees have children and begin families, that force women to leave the fast-track positions” (Mason and Goulden, 90). In hopes of pointing out biases and paving the way for more family-friendly university workplaces, scholars have proposed university-wide policy changes (Eversole, Hantzis, and Reid), criticized the culture of academe, and analyzed psychological tendencies in gender bias (Williams). If these suggested changes were realized, this would ideally allow more academics, both men and women, to successfully balance academe with family lives. The eventual goal would be to increase gender equality in academia, as mothers would not self-select out of the academy. This self-selecting out begins in graduate school as female graduate students weigh the cost and benefits of entering a career in academe. Women often view academe as more flexible than the corporate world, but they soon discover that this is not the case for women seeking tenure. This is particularly true for women wishing to become mothers someday. Women in graduate school are faced with the decision to have children during the graduate school years or put off motherhood until they earn tenure; however, this is risky as their biological clocks are ticking and they may wait too long. In a more equitable environment, women could more easily make these major life decisions. However, these structural inequities are slow to change, and many women, in the interim, are still struggling with the issue of how (or if) to combine motherhood with graduate school. For these reasons, women planning an academic career often choose to have their children in graduate school because of the difficulty of having children on tenure track or after achieving tenure (Spalter-Roth and Kennelly).

Our Personal Experiences

This article explores the institutional and individual obstacles facing graduate student mothers (GSMs) and offers institutional and individual strategies for change. These strategies can be employed by those mentoring GSMs as well as by those responsible for creating an academic culture more welcoming of them.

Throughout the following narrative, we will illustrate these concepts with our own personal experiences. Barbara is currently an associate professor, after having her two boys while in graduate school. With the support of her husband, it took her nine years to complete her doctorate while raising her sons. Siham is a married doctoral student and pregnant with her first son. She is about to complete her preliminary examinations, either before or after the birth of her first child. Although she has yet to parent during her studies, she

has already faced issues because of her pregnancy. Cindy is married to a stay-at-home dad and the mother of a five-year-old. She is an associate professor and serves as the chair of the department where Barbara, Amber, and Siham work. Toni is a married full professor at a major university and has raised two daughters while at her position. Toni served on Barbara's doctoral committee in graduate school. Amber is a married full-time instructor and is enrolled as a student in an online doctoral program. She recently became the mother to twin babies and hopes to make the transition into a tenure-track position. Amber is fulfilling not only the roles of both GSM and full-time instructor, but also the role full-time mother:

Coming from a background where my mother divorced my stepfather when I was thirteen, leaving her to rely on boyfriends for support of my twin sister and me, I decided to make academe a number one priority in my life. I did not have children until I was thirty-four years old. Being the mother of six month old twins is very rewarding but comes with trials. I am currently working on my doctoral degree in business administration. I am glad that I am done with my course work and am finished with everything except my dissertation. However, I not sure which is harder. My course work was pretty cut and dry. The dissertation process is much different and frankly, I am having a hard time wrapping my head around it. In fact, I have hard time wrapping my head around anything these days. I am so busy with my twins, a boy and girl, that I seem to forget most other things.

In other words, all of these women have faced the challenges of juggling a family and a full-time job; others also had the added challenge of attending graduate school.

Obstacles

Balancing motherhood with an academic career is particularly challenging for women (Armenti 66; Drago and Colbeck; Mason et.al.). Many studies have outlined the barriers to achieving tenure during motherhood (Drago and Colbeck; Mason and Goulden; Mason et.al.; "Tenure Denied"). Even more disturbing is the fact that women are self-selecting out of a tenure-track career (Mason and Goulden) and are instead opting for adjunct employment with its more flexibility but lower pay and status. The academy may be losing some of its best and brightest academics because these women want to have both a career and a family and think it is easier to achieve in the private sector—or in the contingent faculty where no research is expected—than in the tenure-track stream.

Fifty years ago, universities began increasing the number of mothers in the academic pipeline by accepting more women into graduate school programs in order to include the perspectives of mothers within the masculine culture of the academy. But the pipeline is still leaking. The ostensible solution now is to create a critical mass of women faculty members who are mothers, but the diffusion of female faculty members throughout the university means that they are still isolated even when they are sufficient in number (Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, and Uzzi).

Institutional Obstacles: Ideal Workers and Ideal Careers

The *ideal worker* construct was first proposed by the mapping project (Drago and Colbeck), which is in turn based on the work of Williams in her groundbreaking book *Unbending Gender*. The ideal worker is a norm that persists in most organizations today. Ideal workers receive a credential, enter the profession, work hard and long hours, and climb the career ladder until retirement. Ideal workers contribute only financially to their families and devote no time outside of work to them. Organizations are organized around ideal workers; therefore, the assumption is that employees must spend as much time as possible on their careers. Rewards, working time rules, and criteria for success are accepted by ideal workers with the presumption that only ideal workers should be in the organization (Drago et al. "Avoidance"). In academe, ideal workers get their PhDs in their twenties and then move on to a postdoctoral fellowship; they become assistant professors on a tenure-track stream, do some teaching and produce some publications, and eventually achieve tenure, becoming full professors (Drago et al. "Avoidance"). Motherhood challenges the ideal worker norm because mothers cannot dedicate all their time to work (Wolf-Wendel and Ward 487). The ideal worker norm can easily be extended to the ideal graduate student norm: graduate students who devote time exclusively to studying, researching, writing, and, in some cases, teaching. Being an ideal graduate student, who pursues an ideal career, often conflicts with being an ideal mother (Lynch; Spalter-Roth and Van Vooren; Trepal et al.).

Drago and Colbeck propose that the primary cause for the lack of caregivers, particularly mothers, not only in academia but also in private industry, is what they term a "bias against caregiving," (45) which follows logically from the ideal worker/student norm: no time is allowed for caregiving. A caregiver cannot be an ideal worker/student and is considered a substandard academic. While there is a bias against both male and female caregivers, the bias may be lessened by the gender schema toward men, which cause women in a caregiving role to practice bias avoidance behaviours. Caregiving has such low status in our society that people (generally women) who take on this role end up in the

lower echelons of pay, rank, and status (Drago and Colbeck). This status can also be assigned to individuals who simply have the possibility of becoming a caregiver (e.g., a woman of childbearing age). This reality results in a bias against mothers in academe and in the assumption that mothers are not fit to sit in the ivory tower because they must direct all their energies to take care of others. In fact, the possibility that caregiving might even enhance one's performance, particularly as a scholar, is all but absent. The mother's perspective in academe is sorely missing, which weakens the academy.

Obstacles: Institutional Gender Biases and Assumptions

Upon receiving their doctorates, young female PhDs often assume that work and family do not mix in the academy, causing one of the major leaks in the pipeline. Many worry about the bias against caregiving. In order to have flexibility, they feel the need to delay having a family and to settle for adjunct work or other low-paid positions (Baer and Van Ummersen; Mason and Goulden). In fact, adjunct and junior faculties are similar to the "pink ghettos" often classified in clerical offices because a much higher concentration of women congregate in these low-paid positions. Holm et al. (14) support the claim that systemic gender bias plays a role in limiting the support of GSMs.

Gender socialization shapes women's choices about what they can and cannot do, while universities socialize students as to what to expect for an academic career—resulting in a lack of choice for women (Wolf-Wendel and Ward). This leads women to opt out of academic careers, but their choice is constrained.

Obstacles—Individual Agency

Drago and Colbeck extend their theory of bias avoidance, which they first proposed in 1999, to include bias acceptance, daddy privilege, and bias resistance. Bias acceptance means accepting the fact that putting family first will result in career repercussions; daddy privilege acknowledges that men are lauded for making time for family commitments while the exhibition of the same behaviour by women is career limiting; and bias resistance is actions taken by women faculty to challenge the bias against caregiving. In bias resistance, women make caregiving explicit by publicly putting family first and by advocating policies that recognize that commitments to both family and work are necessary in the academy.

Barbara describes how she has tried to use bias resistance strategies:

I started my doctoral program while six months pregnant with my first child. While a GSM, I took a class with a professor who was simultaneously

my advisor, department chair and employer (I was his GA). He devised a course with no explicit requirements for evaluation, so each student needed to grade themselves and provide a rationale. The professor gave me a lower grade than I gave myself, stating that I seemed stressed by the recent birth of my child. I got the message that he didn't think it was appropriate for me to talk about my child.

In other words, Barbara's professor gave her a grade lower than she thought she deserved because he had a bias against caregiving. Had she employed a bias acceptance strategy, she would have recognized that her professor would penalize her for her caregiving responsibilities and would not have mentioned her child at all during class or in any conversations with him. Instead, she employed a bias resistance strategy by making her caregiving responsibilities explicit and by talking about her newborn son. The professor used her self-disclosures about caregiving as the basis for claims that she was stressed about her parenting as the rationale and that she deserved a lower grade in the class. Presumably, he was telling Barbara that if she wanted to be seen as a capable graduate student, she should not act stressed by her caregiving responsibilities, and only then would she be deserving of a higher grade.

The mapping project (Drago and Colbeck) also describe productive and unproductive strategies to counteract the bias against caregiving in the academy. Productive strategies recognize that women cannot have both a career and a family and be highly successful in their careers. They are productive strategies in the sense that women who solely focus on their career become very successful in their careers. Productive strategies generally result in the sacrificing of a family for a career, such as staying single, staying childless, delaying childbirth, having fewer children, or using daycare more often than preferred. Lynch (595) terms this "maternal invisibility."

Non-productive strategies, on the other hand, keep family commitments hidden to escape career penalties and are called non-productive because they do not result in as much career success as productive strategies do. Similarly, the "Tenure Denied" report (2004) lists other non-productive strategies, such as taking little or no maternity leave, timing childbirth during the summer, and relying on the personal generosity and flexibility of colleagues and supervisors. If mothers do not take a maternity leave, they can quickly burn out because of lack of sleep and the stresses of new motherhood. Relying on colleagues and supervisors can strain relationships at work. These strategies always come at a cost, and they are not always worth that cost. These strategies are usually employed by GSMs hoping to join the tenured ranks, as they have already made the choice to wait until after they have made tenure to start their families.

Park and Nolen-Hoeksema note: “Being an academic means the work is never done; being conscientious means being chronically haunted by the fact that the work is never done. When you add in a partner and children into the brew, the line between a multi-faceted life and a fragmented, unbelievably stressed out existence becomes very thin” (32). And to this point, we would add the following: mother guilt, the mommy wars (wars between stay-at-home and working moms), and the pernicious belief that women should be punished for having children (Young 20). Lynch (595) terms this strategy to downplay the student role in order to become more like an ideal mother “*academic invisibility*.”

Amber’s family is not very supportive of her academic ambitions:

Another issue I have faced is others not valuing academics. I can remember my mom telling me that if I needed to go to work when my husband was at work that she would watch my twins. However, there have been a few times I called her and told her I needed to read some articles for my doctoral study. My twins were fussy and so I asked her to come over and help me with the twins and she told me she was busy. Not only being emotionally but physically tired was a challenge when my twins were first born. I was always told, sleep when my twins sleep. That was almost impossible when I knew there was work I needed to do. I decided to take some time off when my twins were born, so I have been out of school for eight months. However, I am worried (as I start back to school) that I will not be able to spend much quality time with my babies. I am worried about my motivation. I feel as if I have been going through the motions but my heart really isn't in my work right now. I am not sure why I have this feeling. It is as if there is a battle between that part of me that wants to be this professional working woman and this other part that wishes I could be a stay-at-home mom. I realize that would never happen, but it is something I think about.

As a pregnant doctoral student, Siham is having some difficulty combining the ideal mother with the ideal graduate student:

Being an expecting mother and a PhD student at the same time has come with its set of challenges that I did not anticipate. I come from a different country than the U.S.; my culture is more prone to encouraging females to become stay-at-home mothers rather than pursue their dream careers. I keep up with my college female friends' news, and a large number of them have opted to become stay-at-home mothers and raise their children rather than seek a career. I find that to be very sad and yet very brave. This is what the society expects of females in my country, and this is also another reason why I am just having my first child at the age of 29 while my other

friends back home already have two or more children. Before being pregnant, my PhD timeline and plan was in the form of a Gantt chart where every single milestone of it was planned to the last detail. I considered myself to be an ideal graduate student with all my time being exclusively devoted to studying, researching, writing, teaching and participating in conferences. However, my PhD timeline was soon to face a major schism when I found out I was expecting my first child at the end of the spring semester; for some, this may seem to be the perfect time to have a child, especially that school and classes are over; but this wasn't the case for me. In fact, the end of the spring semester is the time when I am expected to take my doctoral preliminary exams; imagine my shock when I found out I was expecting at the same time. Being an organized person, my life was turned upside down; I did not know how to handle each of these two important life events concurrently and properly; I did not know if I should be happy about expecting my first child or consider it as a curse as it coincided with my preliminary exams.

Toni also remembers the guilt of returning to work after her maternity leave:

I remember feeling guilty returning to work once my maternity leave had ended. Living across the street from work, bringing my child to work frequently, trading shifts with my husband all were working but the guilt still was there. As a researcher, I looked at the literature on working mothers and it was clear that I had no reason to feel guilty.

All three women had similar experiences with feelings of guilt. They experienced changes to their initial timelines caused by leaving school and returning to work because they did not feel as if they had received the needed support.

In addition to struggling to be ideal mothers and ideal graduate students, women face negative stigmas when they occupy non-traditional gender roles. Although these stigmas are becoming less prevalent, they are still a social issue. Traditional gender roles have become less rigid; however, women in breadwinning positions still face disadvantages, such as coping with financial burdens and fighting negative reactions from family and friends (Dunn, Rochlen, and O'Brien).

As the breadwinner in her family, Amber occupies a non-traditional gender role:

While I do have a husband that takes an equal share in the raising of our children and domestic labour, I feel a great deal of pressure since I am the primary breadwinner of the family. I make a significant amount of more

money than he does. This has no impact on our relationship, but it does put pressure on me. One thing that is always in the back of my mind is that if I were to lose my job, we would lose most of what we have. Most of our bills, such as the house payment, insurance, and car payment come from my paycheck. I know that if I do not obtain my doctoral degree that I will not receive a higher pay grade and could eventually lose my position. The heaviness of this issue is something that I think about on a daily basis. In fact, my husband has spoken with me about being a stay at home father while I worked full time. This in turn makes me feel resentful at times. Not necessarily at my husband, but at the thought of feeling like everything falls on me. There are times where friends and family do not support my choice to be in a doctoral program. I have been told that the financial burden alone on our family was something that I should consider. That is a catch twenty-two. I get financial aid, which in turn puts a heavier financial burden on my family; yet, without the degree, I may lose my job which would also be a financial burden on my family. Therefore, when working on my doctoral degree, I feel at times that this is not something I want to do, but something I have to do. This makes my doctoral work unenjoyable at times.

Strategies for Institutional Change

Drago and Colbeck (60-63) suggest that universities need to make accommodations for the reality that non-work commitments ebb and flow over a life span. Van Anders also notes that increased quality childcare would be beneficial, along with accepting that mobility may not be an option for academic mothers especially if they are dependent on family support. She further suggests that benefits begin in graduate school, which would prevent fewer students who want families to self-select out of academe. Moreover, Lynch (593) suggests that finding affordable childcare is of paramount importance to GSMs. Not only is childcare expensive for GSMs, but also the hours of care are inconvenient for them.

Hult, Callister and Sullivan (57) also suggest transitional support to maintain or restart research agendas after personal leaves of absence; Part-time or job-sharing positions would also be helpful. Smith and Waltman recommend reduced duties, such as reduction in class load or service requirements, without loss of pay. There should also be reentry opportunities for mothers who chose to take time off for childrearing (Baer and Van Ummersen). To further confound the problem, Wolf-Wendel and Ward (516) find that institutional support varied by type: research institutions have strict publication expectations; comprehensive and up-and-coming institutions want their faculty to excel at

everything; and small, liberal arts institutions value teaching and service, which is easier to balance with family commitments.

Armenti (65-83) sums it up this way: “The key to supporting childbearing and childrearing in academe is to begin to restructure academic work” (79). Varner’s research “makes a case for restructuring university and college policies to provide faculty with a greater range of reproductive choices than exists at present” (5) because of the high medical risks of late pregnancies.

GSMs also explain about the lack of financial support (Lynch 589). If mothers do not have the support of their spouses, graduate school can be too expensive. Barbara was supported by her husband through her nine years of graduate school while raising two boys; without this support, graduate school would not have been possible for her.

Strategies for Department Support

It has often been noted in the private sector that an organization is only as friendly as the closest supervisor. In academe, this person is the department chair (Hult, Callister, and Sullivan 55). The chair can demonstrate a bias against caregiving or take a neutral stance or even value a parental perspective. Department chairs can have large effects and “[s]upportive supervisors are associated with reductions in reports of bias avoidance” (Drago et al. “Avoidance” 1222). Colleagues can also help reduce bias avoidance behaviors in departments. Toni describes her efforts:

In order to be a role model over the years to other female graduate students and to junior faculty members, I have made motherhood very visible in my workplace. I bring my children to work when it is possible, I talk about them frequently, and I welcome motherhood conversations in my work. I serve on several committees on campus that over the years have made meaningful changes for women on campus, but much work still needs to be done

Amber describes how important a supportive department is:

As for the organization that I work for, I have extreme support, especially by the women that I work with. I feel as if they recognize and sympathize with the struggles that I face and have been willing to work with me and support me being a new mom. I could not ask for a better working environment. There are times where I feel like I have three full time jobs, that of the instructor, doctoral student and mother.

Siham also sought the advice of her advisor after learning of her pregnancy:

I turned to my advisor for guidance, who was also an expecting mother while pursuing her PhD. Her support and words have helped me calm down and reevaluate the situation; I came to the realization that I cannot put my life on hold and stop living while I am pursuing my dream education and career. I also find myself to be very lucky and fortunate to be in a department where the faculty members are very supportive of graduate student mothers or expecting mothers. I was told several times from other males in the field and family members that I was still young to be pursuing my doctoral degree and that I could take time off to raise my child once he is born, and go back to school when he is ready to go to school; however, while this seems to be the perfect scenario, my goal is to finish my degree as planned before I got pregnant. Sticking to my timeline can be very hard, considering the number of physical challenges pregnancy comes with; for example, taking the preliminary exams is a two-day long examination, which might be physically exhausting and stressful not only to me but to the baby as well; my committee chair and advisor is very understanding and compassionate about my situation that she suggested to the PhD committee it would be best if I could have a modified prelim schedule that would break it down to three days instead of two long days of examination.

All three women identified a supportive environment as a prerequisite for success. Without support, the bias against caregiving can be too large of a challenge to overcome.

Campus environments are often unfriendly to GSMs, which results in their marginalization (Anaya 21). In addition to on-site daycare, stations for breastfeeding and/or pumping and changing tables need to be added as well as family bathrooms.

Departments also need to give emotional support to GSM (Lynch 599). Although GSMs feel academically supported, they feel a lack of emotional support. Graduate mothers often get conflicting messages from colleagues about mothering while being a student (Trepal, Strinchfield, and Haiyasoso 31). Small supportive changes would include not scheduling important meetings on important school days, communicating support in emails, and mentoring. Moreover, it is important for colleagues not to make assumptions about pregnant women or GSMs, such as they have a physical disability or will have trouble combining their childrearing and academic lives (Anaya 22).

The “Tenure Denied” report (2004) quips “Happy departments in universities are happy in the same way, but all unhappy departments are unhappy in different ways,” a clever rephrasing of Tolstoy’s famous maxim, and an apt characterization of university life. We never hear about the good departments, only the discriminatory ones.

Cindy is currently the department chair of the department where Barbara, Amber, and Siham work. A mother herself, she describes the strategies that she uses to be flexible and supportive of the needs of all three women in their roles as caregivers:

As the department chair, I can build flexibility into the teaching schedule. When one graduate student faced an at-risk pregnancy, I had to make accommodations for her—allowing her to hold virtual office hours from home, sending work home via her spouse, and having a part-time graduate student cover her on-campus teaching. From home, she was able to teach her web-based course and grade assignments. For one female caregiver, I tried to keep her family role in mind, scheduling her classes earlier in the day to allow her the evening at home with her family. Even though I felt like I was doing a good job mentoring these caregivers, I don't think I fully understood the role entirely until I become a parent myself. I constantly had to remind myself that they would be watching how I juggled my chair's role and my parenting role. I needed to be open with them about my struggles, so they would feel comfortable coming to me when they struggled. They also needed to see a successful role model, so they could develop their own sense of success. We have all heard about stopping the tenure time clock for professors. As part of the parental accommodation, I would advocate for granting an extension in the time-to-degree limit.

Therefore, supervisors can alleviate some of the stress and guilt that is experienced by caregivers by providing a supportive work and learning environment.

Strategies for Individual Agency and Family Support

In order to succeed, women are frequently told they must have an equal and supportive partner. However, the reality is that everyone is a potential caregiver, whether it is of a child, an elderly parent, or another family member. However, women continue to do the bulk of caregiving and domestic labour (Mason and Goulden “Marriage”). For example, faculty women with children at the University of California worked more hours at home and at work, experienced more parental stress from work activities and reported more work/family conflicts than the male faculty did (Mason and Goulden “Marriage”). While this reality is certainly changing, the situation remains tough for women in professional careers. Generally spouses need to be willing and able to bear the brunt of caregiving and to follow wherever the faculty member must go for employment. This is generally not descriptive of women faculty situations.

Barbara's husband supported her both emotionally and financially during graduate school:

It is often said that the most important thing that a woman needs if she wants to combine an academic career with a family is a supportive partner. That has been true in my case. I didn't have to work outside the home and had a lot of help taking care of the children and the home.

Holm, Prosek and Weisberger (2-7), in a phenomenological study of female graduate students who chose to become mothers while graduate students, find the following themes in their study: protective factors (mentors, family, work reductions); evolving identities (student, family, mother) and hindrances (unexpected experiences, timeline delays, and managing resources).

Finally, Toni notes the importance of teaching GSMs to use science and not gender rhetoric to make their life choices:

Over fifty years of research on daycare and working mothers indicated that if quality care is utilized with reasonable number of hours the outcomes for children are excellent. The societal messages about working mothers were race, class and gender based. Clearly, poor women who couldn't afford quality daycare were being told to get off welfare and get to work and professional mothers who could afford good care were told to get home. Poverty and affordable care is the heart of the issue not if a mother should work or not. I share these findings repeatedly with my graduate students encouraging them to be certain to use science and not gender rhetoric to make major life decisions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Clearly some of the strategies to combat this pressure commonly in the literature are remaining childless or concealing family members not only are impractical for women but also are demeaning to them. Men and fathers do not face the same set of impossible circumstances in order to successfully combine parenting and professing. Strategies for supporting GSMs exist at the institutional and department level. GSMs can also utilize strategies to support themselves and help their families to be supportive.

Institutional strategies include providing affordable and high-quality child-care, and developing policies that account for the lack of mobility of GSMs (husbands who cannot move because of their jobs) and allow for transitional support such as reduced workload, extension in time-to-degree limits, time off, and reentry in jobs or programs. Institutions also need to look at the amount of

financial aid offered to GSMs, as this is crucial to retaining them in the pipeline. In short, a restructuring of academic work is needed to not only retain GSMs, but also to keep them from leaking out of the pipeline at all levels. The academy is set up for workers who have no outside commitments and can devote themselves entirely to scholarly work. It neglects members who wish to have families, and therefore the mother viewpoint in the academy is completely ignored (Atkinson). The ivory tower needs to change the culture of the ideal student and worker in the academy to include all viewpoints, especially those of mothers, and to ensure that all talent is retained.

Although institutional policies are important, department chairs are the main source of GSM support. They can help GSMs combat bias avoidance by growing a climate where having children around is acceptable. Department chairs can also reduce workloads, allow virtual office hours when needed, and help with scheduling conflicts. They can offer emotional support, provide mentoring, and serve as role models.

Finally, GSMs themselves can resist the gender bias at home and at work by refusing to feel guilty for not being ideal students or ideal mothers. They need to be sure that their families understand the support that is required to be successful at both roles.

Drago, Colbeck, and Bardoel point out that by excluding individuals who have delayed careers because of family responsibilities from the workplace, some of the best talent is being ignored. The experiences of parenting may have a positive and not a negative effect on both the academy and the private sector. "Leadership is not just about delegating power, it's *growing human capabilities*. This is exactly what we do when we have children" (Crittenden 127). Mothers, who focus on growing human capabilities at home, add a valuable viewpoint in academe where they also focus on growing human capabilities in their classrooms, which also informs their scholarship. This viewpoint is sorely missing in the academy, and it behooves us to remedy the situation.

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Next, the Campus Interview

An Elegy for Graduate Student Mothers

This article offers a frank and candid picture of a mother managing the ins and outs of academic study and a campus interview for a tenure-track position. It offers a creative interrogation into the cultural conversation following motherhood in graduate school and points honestly and openly to a variety of responses in the author's experience. The article ultimately aims to make known the reality of campus visits for mothers and shed light on the cultural discomfort around the issues of academe and mothering.

I spent four years in college treasuring every moment of my courses and curriculum. I had interesting and attentive professors, and during class time, I felt as if I were finally learning everything I had always wanted to know. I was often reading in the library late at night and working on essays in the computer lab first thing in the morning. With like-minded classmates, I dreamed about graduate school—where everyone was serious about intellectual learning, like us, and where there were no fraternity parties or classmates in pajamas. We couldn't wait! I loved being with my female professors especially; they were all so bright and motivating. I hung on to every word of their lectures and began to feel further away from the tired and overworked women in the poor community in which I had grown up. Some of my professors were mothers: one walked to campus after dropping her children off at school in the morning, another had her daughter drawing on the floor when I went to her office hours. In a poetry course, we read Galway Kinnell's "After Making Love We Hear Footsteps," where his son returns to his parents' bed after their lovemaking. Motherhood and an academic career seemed perfectly timed and comfortable enough, much like that sleepy child returning to his parents' embrace.

Indeed, academe can be a refuge for women. The feminist literature on women in academe has challenged traditional assumptions of the academy and what counts as scholarship in many fields. Scholarship on academic motherhood has likewise challenged normative ideas about work in the academy and mothers in academia. I saw the academy as a welcoming place, and I decided to apply to graduate school after some travelling and a few unfulfilling jobs. I wanted what I had imagined came along with a PhD: a fulfilling career, intellectual conversations, and parties full of educated people making jokes about literary fiction and political theory. “Oh, that’s not postmodernism,” someone would taunt, “it’s poststructuralism!” The room would erupt in laughter. More wine would be poured. Partygoers would stop to recite verse or point to pages selected from my many shelves of books. World music would play softly on the stereo.

I was twenty-seven when I started my graduate program. In the shared office across from mine, a young couple typed diligently on their laptops while their child sat and played nearby. The couple appeared so grown up to me, and their child looked so out of place. I had little to say to those parents, and I assumed we did not have much in common. Also, I could not help but notice that a child in this atmosphere seemed odd. Among conference rooms and seminar tables, quiet departmental libraries and computer labs, friendly professors with doors half opened, and grumpy professors with doors completely closed, little of the setting spoke to children or family life.

During the third year of my PhD program, after I had successfully written my qualifying exams, I told my supervisor I was getting married, and she recommended having children sooner rather than later. She had given birth to her only child in graduate school, and has since had a long and successful career. She is known as a student advocate, an excellent teacher, and a brilliant scholar and researcher. She has had Ivy League visiting appointments, written textbooks and chaired multiple departments. “Now is your chance,” she laughed. “It just gets busier from here.”

And it does. According to maternal scholars, women in academe often feel as if there is never a good time to have children, and many who become mothers begin to think outside of academe after the birth of a child (Bueller 287). A gendered and overcrowded tenure system often does not allow time or space for the raising of children, leaving many mothers feeling as if motherhood and the university system cannot coincide. Indeed, many public policies and universities themselves still assume a masculine model in standard employment relationships and perpetuate norms of female caregiving, both paid and unpaid (Vosko 27).

By the fourth year in my program, I had a lot more in common with that couple across the hall: I was one of them, a graduate student mother. After my son was born, everything changed. When he would fall asleep, I would

tiptoe to my desk, sit down at the computer, and slowly begin to revise my dissertation proposal. When I heard him stir, I would scramble to hit the save button, run into his room and nurse him back to sleep. When he was back in bed, I would start to work again. It was hard to stay focused and difficult to think long term: day-to-day life was a lot like sleepwalking. We could not afford regular childcare, so all I could do was hope that my son would start sleeping more and that my dissertation proposal would pass without revisions. Soon I learned to take my laptop to the bed and nurse him on my side, the glow of the computer lighting up his head as he fell back to sleep. I could scroll and edit, but it was difficult to type at a regular pace as I had to lean on my elbow and prop up my head with one hand.

Women pay what has been called a *baby penalty* over the course of their academic careers. A now-famous article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* notes: “Women who have babies while they are graduate students or postdoctoral fellows are more than twice as likely as new fathers or single women to turn away from an academic research career” (Mason 4). Having children not only makes continued studying difficult for mothers, but also marks tenure-track jobs as something unattainable after women begin family life. Scholarship on academic motherhood has noted the invisibility and even incomprehensibility of maternity in academe (Beard 144), and the topic of motherhood itself is often missing from the academy entirely. This invisibility of maternity and of families themselves is constantly reinforced, partly by the way that academics are socialized to expect to work much more than regular work hours. Mothers in the academy often struggle with visibility and fight to maintain their legitimacy as scholars and serious researchers (Beard 149), balancing the demands of the profession with maternal guilt.

I am a graduate student mother who picked up and left her university town to write from afar. This is difficult. I miss out on much of the invaluable networking that takes place in graduate school and also feel like what that couple typing on their computers while their child played must have felt like: an outcast who could not attend social events or graduate council meetings. For many mothers, the university does not feel like a place where we belong. Parent-friendly university infrastructure could certainly change this (Barber 140); at my university, we struggle to find a place that allows children to run on cold or rainy days, and I have nursed babies uncomfortably in departmental seminar rooms and faculty lounges. I trudge on, alone, a feminist mother who incomprehensibly moved to where her husband had a postdoctoral fellowship. Occasionally, when someone asks about my job, I say I am a teacher taking time off.

In fact, when I told my supervisor I was pregnant again, she laughed. One child in graduate school, perhaps, seemed reasonable, but two? My son was in

preschool when my daughter was born. I was travelling once a week to teach at my university for a while. One year, I took a maternity leave, and when my funding ended, I took an adjunct job closer to home. The university system's overreliance on precariously employed faculty leaves many of us scrambling to piece together contractually limited teaching jobs to make ends meet. Feminist political economists have connected this scramble to the increased feminization and commodification of labour, noting the "gendered precariousness" (Vosko 14) that exists in many workplaces. Indeed, scholars who happen to be mothers, more than others, fill precarious, part-time temporary positions in academe. This "world of the invisible" (Ennis 177) relies on hidden temporary faculty, the majority of whom are women who have taken "breaks" for motherhood. Indeed, certain events, such as the birth of a child, can increase all workers' exposure to forms of employment characterized by insecurity (Stanford and Vosko 86). As a mother with small children, I certainly felt as if I had chosen motherhood over scholarship. Somehow I managed to write a few chapters. Some book reviews were submitted and revised and inexplicably, I was able to make it to a couple of conferences.

I had written and revised a good chunk of my dissertation during those late-night nursing sessions and had published in a handful of journals. I was in the middle of my second maternity leave and my first term teaching an introductory course as an adjunct when I happened to come across a job advertising for a tenure-track position in my field. It was at a small liberal arts college less than an hour from where we were living. This is what is known as a *dream job* for someone like me who wants primarily to teach—to work at a college with a few dedicated faculty members where I might develop personal relationships in small classes like the ones I had as a student, the ones I dreamed about when I started graduate school. This job was so nearby and it was an actual chance for a real job in a market where there are only a handful of postings in the social sciences—and maybe only one or two in my actual field—each year. The market is such that many PhDs do semester-to-semester work by contract for a few thousand dollars a course and no benefits. Feminists have made an effort to understand why this choice is made more often by academic mothers than by others in academe, those mothers working as contract labourers or "hidden academics" (Ennis 177) who try to combine motherhood and scholarship. In labour studies, this situation is referred to as *flexibility*, a euphemism for the increased disappearance of income support and social security, the relaxation of labour market regulations, and the rising power of private actors—including universities—to determine the terms of the working relationship. These strategies have been increasingly employed over the past thirty years and have had marked effects on workers, leading to greater vulnerability and polarization. In academe,

flexibility has meant fewer teaching jobs in all fields and a drastic reduction in positions that come with actual job security. In my case, and among many other academic mothers, I assume, it feels like desperation.

As I read the job advertisement, I could not help but think, “This is it! I might have a real chance for a job.” And not just any job but a tenure-track job in my field and in a small, friendly department at a liberal arts college. There, the setting seems to speak to acceptable scholarship: old brick buildings standing between tall trees and landscaped greenery running down a hill toward a large, beautiful lake. It was what I had always wanted! It was not far away from our new home in upstate New York where we liked living: it had a preschool we loved and was where my husband had a job.

I read the job advertisement again and cried. I was so happy to see the perfect job in my field and so close to home. But I was teaching three days a week and I had a tiny baby—how would I ever get the application done? I was overwhelmed by the new course and feeling guilty that the dissertation writing had again been put on hold. The class was one I had never taught before. The students were demanding and the lectures seemed boring even to me. I had asked students to write weekly reflection papers, and I was grading thirty-four each weekend. I was preparing lectures late at night and still getting up with the baby once or twice. It was tiring.

I thought it would be impossible for me to apply for this job. My adjunct pay was so low that I could not afford childcare other than those two hours for three mornings each week that I was in class or commuting. I was trying to write the last two chapters of my dissertation. The students were emailing incessantly; the baby was not sleeping well; the preschooler still wet the bed; and my professional wardrobe was still tight on my postpartum belly. How would I ever make it through a gruelling two-day campus interview? I came across a website written by a former academic that said to *always* send the application because the chance that a campus interview will follow is very, very low. The competition is stiff! Still, she wrote, be prepared for it and think positively. Tell yourself: “Next! The campus interview!” as though it were right around the corner. I still wanted to cry.

The topic of motherhood is, more often than not, completely absent from the academy. Many scholars who are mothers feel on the margins of academe itself, envying those in a privileged place where no babies cry and clothes remain clean all day (Peterson 100). Indeed, Adrienne Rich, in her field-shaping work on motherhood as an institution, reminds us of women’s need for validation in history (85). Similarly, in academe, more than ever, we are fighting for visibility and validation as mothers and scholars and attempting to create systems of knowledge and understanding that refuse to leave motherhood aside (Peterson 103). My own dissertation is on knowledge creation and on the loss of women’s

bodily knowledge over time. Would women have had this knowledge to lose if they had not taken the time to mother?

Yet somehow I decided to send in an application. I carefully crafted a cover letter that touted the college for its student-focused learning and liberal arts environment. I wrote four detailed emails to committee members requesting letters that would specify how perfect I would be for the job. I spent weeks on sample syllabi for courses I could teach. My husband helped me write an inspiring teaching philosophy. I put together a forty-page dossier called *evidence of teaching effectiveness* with well-explained course evaluations, teaching documents, and commentary from colleagues and supervisors. I submitted proof of my language ability, an official course transcript, and a detailed research plan that included three student-driven projects. I spent months writing and preparing these documents, lying on my side, nursing, typing into the wee hours of the morning. “I can do this!” I tried to tell myself as I shuffled around in the morning, packing lunches, changing diapers, grading papers, printing my cover letter on letterhead and editing it again. After seven years of graduate school and multiple maternity leaves, I had taught my subject, other subjects in the social sciences, and basic writing courses. I had great students who had done wonderfully, failing students who had needed extra attention, and a handful who had cheated on tests and essays. I managed new course preparations and produced a variety of peer-reviewed publications. I worked as a research assistant, a teaching assistant, and a course instructor. And yet, when that beautiful small liberal arts college called to offer me an interview, I did not feel ready. I did not take the advice of that academic blogger. I did not actually believe they would call and I did not say “Next: the campus interview!” to myself as I was trying to fall asleep. Like many new mothers, perhaps, who struggle to balance maternal guilt with “scholarly legitimacy” (Beard 147), I had convinced myself I was never doing enough and could not call myself an academic. I answered the phone in the middle of the afternoon while the baby was crying and my four-year-old son was yelling at me for not cutting his peanut butter toast in half. Luckily, my husband was home and could distract the children while I answered, shaking my hand at him enthusiastically: “They called. They actually called!”

The chair of the department and head of the search committee introduced himself and asked if I were willing to come to campus for a two-day interview in the next few weeks. What I wanted to say was this: my economic class position has left me with forty thousand dollars in student loans, my husband has recently lost his postdoctoral funding and we are living on unemployment insurance. In fact, if you look at my day-to-day life, you will see that it is more like a stay-at-home mom than a serious academic. I take my son to preschool at 8:30 a.m. On Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I get up at 6:00 a.m., do a load

of laundry, find something that resembles a professional outfit, and leave a sleeping baby and a urine-soaked, crying preschooler. I leave at 7:30 a.m. to prepare my 9:00 a.m. class and down a quick cup of coffee on the walk across campus. On the other days, I still get up at 6:00 a.m. to do a load of laundry, wake the baby, change her, nurse her, and make us all breakfast. I then go to the gym, where there are two free hours of child care, and sometimes work out, but mostly I take those two hours to prepare my class, answer student emails, prepare discussion questions, and student assignments. The students can see through this: my tired lectures make them fall asleep; my hastily written discussion questions often fall flat. Sometimes I show up with nothing and, like them, have barely done the reading.

“All of this,” I wanted to say, “has prevented me from becoming a serious academic. You must have the wrong number.” Instead, I took a deep breath, put on my best “serious academic” voice and said: “Yes, I would love to interview! Thank you for the opportunity for a campus visit.” I took a moment after I hung up to imagine another academic life for myself, where I was not scraping by on three thousand dollars paid out over four months for an entire course after having done a month of free work to prepare the course and the readings, where there had been time and money to do that and do it well.

I often try to imagine a different academic world, where graduate student mothers are supported and encouraged, where the news of having children is not something to be ignored or laughed at, but to be discussed openly. Friendly interview questions such as “How do you see yourself fitting in here?” or “What does this have to do with the subject area in which we are hiring?” would be more realistic. At the ideal campus visit, the phrase “I don’t get it”—which was said to me by a tenured male professor after my actual job talk—would be frowned on as a rude opener and the more typical “that was interesting” preface that we generally take for granted as a sign of civility and collegiality would not be completely absent. At the ideal interview, I would not speak with a tenured male professor peering at me silently from behind stacks of books in an apparent effort to intimidate me. Universities would allow time and space for children, who would not only be mentioned but cared for, and mothers would not be the exception at campus interviews but the norm.

This is not that world, and that is not what happened. When I hung up the phone, I was excited but scared. I was afraid that they would see through me for what I was: a so-called academic on maternity leave who had read exactly one book in her field this year, who had not gone to a conference or presented a paper in almost two years, and who had only written a few words of her dissertation since that baby was born. What did I fear most? I feared that during the job talk breast milk would leak down the front of me, staining the front of

my blouse, and would leak through my plum-coloured suit jacket. After all, if I didn't get the job, I would need to return it to the store.

The Interview

Everything kicked into high speed, and my world revolved around the interview until it was over. I did the appropriate research on the department and the search committee. I knew what they had published, what they were teaching, where they attended graduate school, and where they had most recently presented papers.

The interview was to be spread out over two full days. It involved a meeting with the provost, and half-hour meetings with twelve individual faculty members, except one tenured faculty member who insisted on scheduling his for an hour.

I tried on suits for a friend to make sure they fit. She asked me to try on the other outfit for the second day and insisted I go to the store to get a non-nursing bra. I bought extra blouses and hid them in my briefcase in case the baby spat up all over the first one. I recalled a *Chronicle* article in which an academic mother recounted her own "bodily suffering" as she attempted to nurse her infant through the interview process (Smith 7).

I devised my job talk in the hours that the baby napped, only after I had gotten home from my adjunct position, after I had made dinner and gone to the grocery store, and after I had finished lying on my side and nursing my daughter to sleep. We scrambled for free childcare from single friends who felt sorry for us. I practiced the job talk for my husband, and he made suggestions and edited my power point slides. A friend brought us all lasagna the night before we left for the interview since we had not had time to cook. This one shot might be my only chance. My adjunct position could end at any moment, and I was afraid there would be no other possible route to a job and no possible way to support all of us indefinitely. Shortly before the interview, my husband lost his postdoctoral position, reminding us of the increasing precariousness of academic work.

Finally, armed with a borrowed briefcase, a power point talk, pages of notes on each faculty member, xeroxed and stapled sample syllabi and study abroad programs, I headed to the campus visit. I had let the chair know I had a nursing and would need to bring my husband to take care of her. Of course, since my husband would be with me, and since we had no one else to take care of the four-year-old, we would be bringing him too. I needed scheduled breaks in the two-day schedule of interviews with faculty, meals with students, and campus tours. The department administrator sent my schedule to me the day before I arrived with scheduled half-hour breaks, which I suspected was to be my nursing time. When I arrived, no private place was offered in which

to nurse. Should I sit in the hallway outside of the chair's office or perhaps the nice chairs by the windows where the students hang out before classes, I wondered. I saw the administrative assistant admonish a student for bringing her a receipt instead of getting petty cash first; her office didn't seem friendly for a nursing mother and cranky infant. It felt risky to admit to the search committee chair that I would be travelling with my family. We even paid for an extra night at the hotel because I could not imagine travelling with small children early in the morning and arriving at the interview on time without some major catastrophe befalling us.

When I had these so-called breaks, I rushed to see my daughter and to nurse her quickly, even if she started to cry and I started to leak everywhere. There was no space made available, so I nursed her in the car, running the engine in the cold November northeast.

The hour-long job talk, in which I presented my research, went fairly well, although I found those "I don't get it" comments offensive. The three tenured male professors discussed their lack of understanding my work among themselves as I stood at the front of the room. Many questions involved questioning my reluctance to do recent fieldwork. I wasn't sure how to address this: I had done a total of three years of fieldwork in the years before I had become a mother. How was this not enough? I wanted to say: "I was not able to do fieldwork since 2008 because I have been pregnant or nursing small children" and "My husband could not have exactly left the country when he was looking for a job." Instead, I said, "No, I haven't done recent fieldwork."

Toward the end of the two days of interviews, I realized that it will all come down to this: I am attempting significant scholarship during the parenting of two children. We have managed to survive a lost job, seven years of graduate school for each of us, and two maternity leaves. We have lived from paycheck to paycheck, from unemployment benefits to food vouchers, and have done applications for every example of financial assistance. Still, I teach three classes a week and bring home a 150 dollar paycheck at the end of it. We have managed student loans and extra borrowing for conferences and fieldwork. We have handled four-hour commutes to teach and extended trips for archival work and fieldwork. Now there is a forty-page bibliography and a three-hundred page dissertation to show for it, but still it feels as if I have managed to fail at this whole thing.

I received an email one month later letting me know that someone else was offered the job and had accepted. I am sure there were many reasons why I did not receive the job. I did not have a finished dissertation or a book contract. I shyly admitted to one of the faculty members that I wished my foreign language skills were better. I was embarrassed and not sure how to respond when, over dinner, a faculty member asked why I was staying at a hotel instead of the

campus apartment; soon it came out that I had brought along small children. I was intimidated in the question-and-answer session that followed my job talk, and I did not answer the questions well. I was also intimidated by that tenured professor positioned behind piles of books who seemed to want me to feel panic-stricken. But there were also wonderful moments. I impressed some with the syllabi I had brought along and the plans I had designed for research programs. Many individual conversations with young faculty members were positive, and I connected so well with one student that she hugged me when I left.

I do not really know how much interest there was in my candidacy among the committee. Maybe I was on the job market too soon. This is all hard to know. I can say that I got the distinct impression that they were interested in someone who had done more recent fieldwork. Perhaps the preferred candidate is also a graduate student mother. Next time, if there is another interview, I will most likely not reveal myself as a mother at all. Although there could have been a million reasons this job went to someone else, I cannot help but go back to that moment when they questioned my reluctance to do fieldwork.

If we are serious about supporting the careers of mothering women in academe, we must revisit who we want to hire and why. If we want to support only scholars who can defer, or even abandon, their dreams of having children, we should continue as we are. If we want change to happen, we need to welcome mothers differently. We need to make departments more open, accessible and friendly in order for mothers, and their families, to become more comfortable with job interviews and universities. When I arrived at the interview, I was already intimidated and scared; being nervous about nursing and managing the children did not help. At the end of the second day, I was exhausted and frustrated with the intimidating tenured men who grilled me, and instead of trying to nurse the baby privately, I sat in those windowed seats outside of the department, where the students sometimes gathered, and nursed her. The department never offered to pay for my travel costs, and I was too embarrassed to ask.

I struggle to recognize the much more complicated set of expectations that lead mothers to feel as if they must choose between raising children and having an academic career. Only six students registered for my spring term class this year, and when it was cancelled, I realized that I would earn only half of the six thousand dollars I had hoped to make this year. I try not to blame myself for attempting to schedule an evening class when my husband would be home for childcare, and I try to recognize the deeper structural components that make it difficult, or perhaps impossible, for many maternal scholars to succeed. The forms of subtle discrimination in the academy—what Beard labels “microdiscrimination”—is difficult both to recognize and to change. It is hard to mea-

sure and subtle enough, as she points out, to lead to a “bias avoidance” (147), where mothers do not feel comfortable asking for the accommodations that they might need. I was given an academic interview with time in the schedule to nurse my child but no comfortable place to do so. I felt that a request for a place to nurse would have been unwelcomed.

At least I had one interview, I often think. It was, of course, a good experience to be one of the final three candidates for a much-coveted position. But it made me long even more for a secure job in a friendly and interesting department, where feminist discussions abound, where colleagues read my work and comment on it, where students come by to an actual office for office hours, where there is time and space to prepare my lectures and grade papers, and where children are nearby and welcome. I would like to start a cooperative preschool for graduate student mothers who need to finish their dissertations, a faculty lounge where tenured mothers would provide mentorship to graduate student mothers, and a support group where students can exchange interview suits with attached notes about how to get breast milk out of them.

I agreed to write a book review for the department chair who interviewed me. Two months later, I sent it in. It is difficult for all mothers to juggle everything. I scanned the book as best I could and wrote the review late at night, lying on my side and nursing my daughter.

Even now, as I am typing this account of my campus visit, she is asleep on the bed next to me. I could leave and go back to my desk, but I would risk waking her, and I might have to come and nurse her soon anyway. Her right hand is resting on my arm while I type, as if it comforts her to know I am close by. She is especially beautiful when she sleeps.

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Moving My Brain to Canada

Motherhood and International Mobility as an Academic Career Requirement

This article highlights the challenges encountered by mothers in academe who face the demand of international mobility as a career requirement. In order to call attention to some of the policies and strategies that best empower mothers who move, I use qualitative and quantitative studies that document the different implications of academic mobility policies for men and women and their “gendering and stratifying effects on academic careers” (Leemann and Boes 213) in conversation with some of the insights I gained through my personal experience as a mother and as a postdoctoral fellow, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, conducting independent research in Canada. While I locate the ideal, readily mobile and unencumbered young Swiss researcher within cultural expectations that consider mothers as primary or sole caregivers of children, I question the persistent rhetoric of sacrifice both in the maternal and in the professional academic domains. I also call attention to the tendency to silence personal experience and circumstances in most discourses promoting academic mobility to early career researchers.

The demand to enhance one’s research (and, more rarely, teaching) experience abroad is characteristic of academe in small, multicultural, and multilingual countries such as Switzerland, though it is now increasingly common in the European Union, too. For scholars who also are mothers, *international* mobility raises specific challenges, even if many of them are similar to those arising from the more general demands of professional academic mobility in North America. In Switzerland, whether or not mothers share childrearing tasks and domestic work equitably with their partners, which is far from being the norm (“Enquête sur les familles” 12-17), they continue to be regarded as the primary caregivers of children. Mothers thus stand at the intersection of

two categories that remain, including in academe, disadvantaged professionally: women and parents. Even if the challenges of international mobility are extended to include all researchers who wish to become or are involved parents, the situation is particularly difficult for mothers who experience this double discrimination.

Research experience and collaboration with colleagues in other countries and inclusion, or even leadership, in international networks constitute key assets for an academic career in Switzerland. In the foreword of its *2014 Annual Report*, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the principal research agency funded by the Swiss government, reminds its readers that “there is no way around internationality” (3). The necessity of spending an imprecise period of time outside of one’s home country is reiterated early enough to graduate students, both men and women, with or without children, who show an interest in an academic career path. So much value is placed on international experience that the SNSF sponsors research stays through granting competitive fellowships to the most-promising early career scholars. While a stay abroad is not a technical requirement to be employed in positions such as sessional instructor or junior lecturer, for positions of a higher rank, that of assistant professor,¹ for example, international experience might weigh heavily in a hiring decision between two candidates with equal qualifications. Although not always underappreciated, this international dimension of research appears to be less important in Canada and in the USA.

In “Second Wave Silence and Third Wave Intensive Mothering,” motherhood scholar Lynn O’Brien Hallstein reflects on her experience as an American-trained academic and a feminist after moving temporarily to Zurich, the largest city in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, in the early 2000s. She felt “like a fish out of water” and experienced Swiss “cultur[al] expectations of women as being like the American 1950s ideal for women” (112). Because I was raised and worked in the French-speaking part of the country, where expectations of motherhood are slightly different, I do not share her perspective, although I understand the cultural elements that can prompt a characterization of Switzerland as “a country that is so different in terms of its culturally understood beliefs about women” (112). For instance, the fourteen weeks of paid (80 percent) maternity leave became a legal right at the national level only in 2005, although many companies in the private sector, most state-funded universities, and Swiss states (*cantons*) already were offering some maternity leave to most female employees (as civil servants).

If discriminations against *women* are slowly becoming less pervasive in Switzerland, those against *mothers* remain an issue. I am not suggesting that I am now living in a country where everything is perfect for mothers. Yet, in contrast with O’Brien Hallstein’s perception of Switzerland as a newcomer,

my recent move to Canada felt like jumping into an advanced “feminist pond” (at least in theory) rather than feeling like “a fish out of water” (112). It has made me even more aware of the extent of gender inequality and of “processes of gendered exclusion” in my country of birth in general, and in academe in particular (Leemann, Boes, and Da Rin 127). The first empowering effect that my research stay at a major Canadian university personally had on me was exposing me to a plurality of family-friendly discourses, practices, and models that do not (yet) exist in the Swiss academy. Some of these discourses, practices, and models are effectively supporting mothers and increasing the proportion of women in academe. For Swiss researchers, going abroad thus constitutes a unique opportunity to witness the concrete results of such policies: more mothers who become professors, more professors with children in diverse family configurations, and more mentors willing to talk about these issues.

The decision to move abroad for the principal purpose of academic research requires having not only individual agency, conjugal consensus, and family balance (if applicable) but also financial resources and administrative clearance. For Swiss researchers, a fully funded mobility fellowship from the SNSF is one of the most convenient tools to carry out such an academic and personal project. In 2014, this government-sponsored agency and major actor in shaping Swiss research politics granted 353 early postdoctoral mobility and 146 advanced postdoctoral mobility fellowships to young researchers—and 38 percent and 35 percent of them, respectively, were women—trained in Switzerland² in all disciplines, in order for them to spend periods ranging from twelve to thirty-six months at a host institution abroad (SNSF “2014 Annual Report” 33). Even though the organization strives to promote more egalitarian models of career support, and despite recent improvements, some programs and policies of the SNSF nevertheless remain gender biased (Fassa and Kradolfer). Moreover, the core of gender inequality issues lies in the universities themselves as they are the only institutions to offer long-term and stable positions; this reality contrasts with the SNSF, which supports individual career phases as well as independent and collaborative research projects limited in time.

From a feminist perspective, the difficulty in such debates is to acknowledge the specific challenges posed to mothers by the demand of international mobility without essentializing women as mothers and without framing this as only a women’s issue, but rather as everyone’s concern. In the following, after showing how both academic careers and motherhood are framed in a rhetoric of sacrifice in the context of Swiss academe, I go on to explain how the “demand to be readily mobile and to gather research experience at a research institution abroad” (Leemann “Gender Inequalities” 609) impacts academic mothers, their partners, and their families. In an attempt to combine the au-

thority of an academic perspective in motherhood studies with the authenticity of personal trajectories, I include reflections derived from conversations about international academic mobility that I have had during the past five years with graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and professors in Switzerland, Canada, the U.S., and elsewhere.³ I call attention to the ways in which maternal (and, more generally, personal) voices of fellows (i.e., scholars who have been granted a research fellowship) tend to be silenced in official events promoting international mobility to early career researchers in Switzerland, especially at the postdoctoral level. I will also consider some of the concrete, and sometimes unexpected, consequences of international mobility on family life. Finally, my conclusion highlights which policies work best to empower mothers pursuing their academic careers with an enriching postdoctoral research stay outside of their home country.

Sacrifices and “Women’s Issues” in the Swiss Academy

A rhetoric of sacrifice—as defined by Adrienne Rich’s notion of motherhood as an institution—and of suffering to achieve one’s academic goals are frequently deployed in discourses about (potential) academic careers of women of childbearing age. This rhetoric persists to this day even in official discourses in Swiss academe. In the English version of a November 2014 blog post entitled “Promoting the Research Careers of Women,” the president of the Gender Equality Commission of the SNSF correctly writes that “there is no significant gap in education in Switzerland, yet there is a pronounced gender gap when it comes to the senior or managerial levels, and in the amount of funding allocated” (Gasser).

Several studies focusing on the specificities of the Swiss academic system in international comparison (Leemann et al.; Fassa and Kradolfer; O’Brien Hallstein; Wiedmer) have pointed out how “the matrices of Swiss academia and the steep hierarchical power structures that saturate them have produced and continue to produce a body of academics that, in terms of the classic triad of class, ethnicity, and gender, is quite homogeneous” (Wiedmer 56). Caroline Wiedmer further explains that “the particular way Swiss power relations in academia have worked in the past to withhold from its mid-tiers academic security, influence over the way the academy is run, and direct access to resources has brought forth a body of academics of relatively little diversity, and unequal gender representation” (60). This is the case in other countries as well, whether or not they implement gender equality programs such as those of the SNSF. In a 2011 publication of the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics (OFS), we learn that “in the Swiss institutions of higher education, men account for as much as 83 percent of all professorships” (OFS “Perspectives de la formation” 12). As of

2012, 49 percent of women professors in Switzerland did not have children, compared to only 36 percent of male professors (Dubach, Graf, and Stutz 11). Contemplating such “sobering” statistical results, the SNSF official quoted above points out in her blog post that “[m]ore women are involved in early career stages, but they are not promoted, and often *decide* to quit research and *sacrifice* their academic careers” (Gasser; my emphasis).

Shrouding these facts in a rhetoric of opting out, the blog poster then gives her interpretation as to why women quit: “I believe they do this based on subconscious assumptions or misdirected beliefs, for instance, that having a family and an academic career are mutually exclusive, or even—god forbid—that men are better suited for science than women” (Gasser). The rest of her blog post makes it clear that such “subconscious assumptions or misdirected beliefs” are attributed only to these highly educated women of Switzerland at an age when they face choices regarding maternity (including the options of *not, not yet* or *not again* becoming a mother) and, frequently too, the demand for an international research stay. That senior members of committees who would be able to fund or hire these early career scholars into stable positions should also share such biased assumptions is never questioned. In some institutions, though, these researchers face discrimination not so much as women but as mothers who are implicitly, or sometimes very explicitly, assumed to be less dedicated to research than their colleagues—women without children and men without *or with* children. Contradicting these assumptions, many researchers who *mother*—in Sara Ruddick’s sense of *mother* not only as a noun but also as a verb—in fact have to consider very practical and financial issues in organizing their day-to-day schedules, with resources that may not allow for childcare or a stay abroad as their partners may not be able to take an unpaid or minimally paid leave. That the SNSF grants some supplementary funding for the accompanying partner who remains unemployed during the stay abroad is helpful, but income is not the only criteria in such decisions.

In recent years, a compelling discourse on gender equality is challenging the “current structure, and its implied hegemonic discourse on what constitutes academic fitness and excellence” by Swiss standards (Wiedmer 58). The SNSF and other agencies (such as the equal opportunity offices within Swiss universities) are doing their best, at the local and national level, to promote the advancement of women’s careers through gender equality.⁴ Although there is no major issue with these successful programs themselves, the rhetoric that they are enshrined in is problematic because it constructs early career women scholars as “deficient” and as “needing extra help.” Certainly, it is not the sole responsibility of funding agencies to question either the unfairness of certain elements of current academic systems or the reproduction of social constructs. Easier to dismantle, however, through critical discourse analysis, are this per-

sistent rhetoric of sacrifice and its diffusion of views on motherhood that see it as major impediment to an academic career. In both formal and informal conversations, it would help empower early career women scholars to avoid positioning motherhood as an obstacle to academic success and as a personal development luxury, something to be only sought after the almost mandatory research stay abroad, or even upon becoming a tenured professor, usually at an age when fertility is already declining. The now well-documented gendered “leaky pipeline” (Leemann, Dubach, and Boes) will not be fixed as long as the issue of work-life balance is considered only a women’s issue, or, worse, as each individual woman’s issue, further privatizing it.

Moms on the Move, International: Academic Ex-Matriation

Academic institutions and funding agencies insufficiently address questions about the reconciliation of motherhood not only with an academic career in general but also with the requirements of a stay abroad. The picture of the ideal academic researcher, and in particular that of the (future) applicant to positions at the professorial level, still remains that of “an individual who is young, unencumbered and totally dedicated to his occupation” (Fassa and Kradolfer 192, quoting Fassa, Kradolfer and Paroz 3). Being unencumbered in particular seems to be a prerequisite for mobility, whether in the short term (conferences, invited talks, job interviews) or in the long term (international postdoctoral research stays, permanent professional expatriation). Mothers typically are not regarded as “unencumbered” or as “totally dedicated” to academic endeavours. As also noted by Leemann,

[a]cademics who are less able and willing to meet the requirements of the outlined ideal of an academic entrepreneur—female and older academics, without academic family background, living in partnership, dual-career constellations and with children, less frequently supported by mentors and without funding support—are at a disadvantage in the contests for recognition in the academic field. (“Gender Inequalities” 623)

In addition to not corresponding to the “ideal type of academic entrepreneur,” mothers are often perceived as immobile because the mother work they perform is generally tied to local structures and networks of kin and peers (family, friends, daycares, schools), which facilitate their professional and their other personal engagements with society at large.

Departing from one’s home country and arriving in a new one involves a significant amount of administrative work (securing legal immigration doc-

uments, finding appropriate housing, dealing with several types of insurance, social security, bank accounts, communications, enrollment in new daycare or school, etc.). Once the period of preparing for departure (disenrollment from daycare, cancelling subscriptions, administrative processes, buying airplane tickets, etc.) is over, outbound fellows start it all over again with the process of settling in. All of this is done in addition to preparing and starting the academic research project itself. Obviously, both men and women experience the administrative hassles of expatriation, but in addition to these, mothers also experience a situation of *ex-matriation*. By this term, I mean the situation of mothers with children who live as expatriates and far away from their extended family and relatives (such as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, and any other relative, male or female, who could help with caregiving). I will now outline some aspects of ex-matriation.

Taking some distance from one's alma mater after completing a graduate degree is intellectually beneficial. However, it is rarely acknowledged that moving abroad cuts academic mothers off from their traditional support networks (if any) that they are privileged to access at home. In the case of Switzerland, these networks tend to function through feminine and in particular maternal kin support and connections: because collective structures often do not meet real needs (e.g., daycares might offer only three days of caregiving out of the five needed in a week), many parents in Switzerland work part time and/or rely on help from relatives not only in cases of emergencies (e.g., a child's sickness) but also for regular childcare. In most families, mothers are in charge of constructing and maintaining such support networks. Unless they can rely on their partner while abroad, mothers will continue to try and coordinate events but in a more complex situation. Ex-matriate mothers cannot just find or access such trusted networks of caregiving upon arrival, even if they have the means to do so: they strive to build them. Mothers (generally more than fathers) work towards establishing relationships of trust in which the mutual providing and requesting of caregiving services feels appropriate and safe. This takes social skills and time. The duration of international stays abroad often does not allow academic mothers, who are meant to focus on their research and to participate in academic events, to establish such support networks. Moreover, moving abroad jeopardizes networks at home that need continuous maintenance: a long stay abroad might mean starting all over again at the bottom of a long waiting list for daycare or for enrollment in before- and after-school care upon returning. Such situations, which result from what I call ex-matriation, are rarely addressed in the official discourses of the SNSF, but this does not mean that they are never talked about: alternative spaces of discussion emerge where relevant questions are asked, even if they are not always answered.

Silencing the Personal and Maternal Experience

At the end of a SNSF mobility fellowship, researchers must account for their results, most often in quantitative terms (i.e., number of publications). They seldom are given the opportunity to speak publicly about the administrative, social, familial, or health issues that they have encountered (and most of the time solved) during their stay abroad. Admittedly, these might not be of interest to everyone, as these situations are extremely diverse and indeed very personal. Family situations have ceased to be a complete taboo and are discussed in official reports of the SNSF (for instance in that authored by Leemann and Stutz), but the status of those who “[take] responsibility for children’s lives and for whom providing child care is a significant part of his or her working life” (Ruddick 40), whether the applicants themselves or their partners, is left out of most public discourses by SNSF representatives at events regularly organized to promote mobility fellowships to young Swiss researchers. Academic success and career enhancement are the main focus, but issues that concern very practical family matters are also regularly brought up, by attendees rather than by the SNSF contact persons, during the more informal question-and-answer sessions and peer-to-peer discussions that follow information sessions. My own experience is that such topics also surface in conversations happening at the receptions following such events.

Furthermore, tales of interrupted or uncompleted stays usually are silenced both by fellows and by funding agencies, even if regulations about such cases do exist (e.g., concerning the reimbursement of interrupted fellowships). Disruptions of initial research plans due to accidents, illness, death, or pregnancy are bound to happen more frequently than the master narrative of seamless, publication-productive, research-focused and career-enhancing stays, where family situations and spousal relationships play no role at all, would have you believe. We rarely hear about Swiss researchers in relationships with non-Swiss nationals whose mobility is more restricted than that of Swiss citizens. And what about an academic mother who is divorced and whose ex-spouse will not allow her to take the children, even for a short vacation, out of the country? For these mothers, it is impossible to pursue their research abroad unless they go alone. Are they expected to choose between residing in the same country as their children or their academic career? Whatever their choice, mothers take the risk that either their social or professional networks will interpret their decision as sacrificial: sacrificing their socially constructed status as good mothers, sacrificing the well-being of their children, or sacrificing their careers.

International research stays that are delayed, cancelled, or interrupted because of pregnancy constitute another example of silenced experiences. Because much fear remains that such interruptions will be interpreted as failures, these

stories are discussed only privately and told only to sympathetic ears. Moving to another country while pregnant might prove difficult for women requiring continuity in their pregnancy care. It is already enough of a challenge to change healthcare providers in one's home country. Dealing with the intricacies of a new healthcare system and finding access to a suitable specialist of pregnancy and childbirth right upon arrival is something that most future mothers probably would like to avoid, even though it is technically possible, especially in countries that offer free universal healthcare coverage. Even in Canada, where this is the case, newcomers on a work permit (like postdoctoral fellows) in Ontario are excluded for a three-month period from the Ontario Health Insurance Plan that offers basic coverage to everyone. Subscribing to a private insurance care provider upon arrival is the only option if the tight budget of a mobility fellowship can afford it. Being pregnant and giving birth while abroad also raise the issue of the quality of insurance and healthcare and the associated costs. Because their status is not clearly defined in certain host universities, postdoctoral fellows might not access the same health insurance benefits as regular graduate students, faculty, and staff. This is especially true when they are funded by an external international agency and not through the university's payroll. In the case of serious complications not covered by the health plan of her host institution, a pregnant woman might even be forced to return to her home country to benefit from provided healthcare services.

As scholars seeking international experience, we are moving not only our brains but also our bodies and our families abroad, preferably in a carefully planned move. This is not just stating the obvious, but it is also passing on valuable, concrete, and practical information or tips that will save others time and trouble and allow more time for the research itself. I am not suggesting that returning fellows should be forced to disclose to funding committees the personal hurdles that they might have encountered. It is understandable that they might not wish to do so and, instead, focus on their research achievements. Some may be hesitant to share their experience not only as a researcher but also as a mother (or a father) because of the fear that this might undermine their academic status. Many academics still feel that such a disclosure might be read as an ungrateful complaint or seen as a failure. However, it would be empowering for mothers in academe to be given space to share their personal and practical tips about international mobility, perhaps anonymously. Such conversations are already taking place anyways: at this moment, formal and informal discussion groups on social networks (e.g., LinkedIn) provide an alternative space where aspects of mobility stays, other than purely academic ones, are discussed between outbound, current and, returning international fellows as well as with the SNSF and other funding agencies. While such questions are left out of official discourses promoting mobility, they nevertheless surface

regularly, sometimes as central concerns, in personal narratives and conversations among those who experienced international mobility or wish to do so.

Virtuous Sacrifices? Families Living Apart

In 2012, I obtained one of the competitive SNSF international postdoctoral fellowships⁵ in order to pursue postdoctoral research in Toronto. A few weeks before my family's set departure date to Canada, I attended a workshop on mobility and family life, organized in the framework of a collaborative program offered by the equal opportunity offices of francophone Swiss universities. This was one of the very few occasions, before the departure date, in which I could hear maternal tales of mobility in an official context.

The already mentioned trope of "virtuous sacrifice," both professional and maternal, was present in the workshop's conversations. Most of the invited speakers were successful women who had secured stable positions in various Swiss institutions and thus were potential role models. Other speakers were men whose uncommon work arrangements were presented as potential models, although, the fact that they were exceptional—and somehow subversive—innovations was repeatedly underlined. We also heard about a case (then apparently still unique in Switzerland) of academic job sharing for a position where each one of the (now-tenured) professors held 50 percent of the workload and kept 50 percent of the salary. If they could not have been imitated, because they corresponded to specific personal and institutional situations, these arrangements, at least, should have inspired us, as emerging researchers, to revolutionize academe's hierarchical and pyramidal system from the bottom up.

At this workshop, one of the speakers recounted how she had lived away from her husband and children for a few months during her research stay in a European country. She achieved her international mobility goal and subsequently obtained a stable position in Switzerland. She had kept in touch daily with her school-aged children through Skype. In reaction to this testimony of a temporary long-distance family relationship, a participant hailed the husband of the speaker as a hero for taking full childcare responsibility during this time. But the participant also wondered how her partner, working in a full-time position with many responsibilities, could afford to do so. Others noted that delegating childcare to paid caregivers is not a solution for everyone.

My intention is not to criticize such arrangements. The particular family experiences discussed in this workshop apparently resulted from consensus. I was surprised, however, that these arrangements were presented as models to aspire to rather than as the compromised results of dealing with existing policies and confronting a socially conservative mentality that still assigns to

mothers the primary or exclusive responsibility for childrearing (OFS “Enquête sur les familles” 29). While trying to bring in some nuance about the status of such arrangements, the moderators made commendable efforts to place authentic maternal voices at the centre of the conversation in a context where they usually are silenced or, worse, they self-censor. While such models might be perfectly acceptable for some mothers and children, separate family living, which could be considered forms of “non-resident motherhood” (Gustafson), might not work for every family. Furthermore, we should also appreciate the qualitative and quantitative difference between being away for one week, or even a whole month to attend academic events, and spending a semester or longer abroad researching. In such cases, the age and needs of the children should be taken into consideration, and how the mother feels about such arrangements must not be ignored.

After the workshop, I wondered if anyone else felt that this rhetoric of sacrificing was unappealing and discouraging. I was also baffled by the fact that the assumptions underlining such discourses were so rarely questioned. I noticed that none had mentioned cases of single parenthood or the risks of breakups and divorce that might arise from long-distance relationships over an extended period of time (and, I would add, particularly in academic ones, even if many other factors play a role). At the informal reception following the workshop, other participants, mostly women, shared their thoughts about the session. The general take away message was that the invited speakers had succeeded in their mobility project and careers in spite of motherhood. A doctoral student and mother of two children said that family could never do this. Another participant explained that her husband, a specialist in Swiss family and divorce law, could not possibly leave his law firm, even for just six months. The workshop had just smashed their dreams of mobility and, subsequently, of an academic career. Instead of encouraging them to continue scholarly work after their PhD, even while remaining in Switzerland, the workshop had only made them painfully more aware of how impossible the demands of such arrangements were in their particular situations.

My own husband, working in the field of academic library management, could not get a long-term unpaid leave and had to resign from his position in order for us to live together in Canada as a family during *my* postdoctoral research stay. Was I actually jeopardizing *his* career? How high a price to pay was it for us to trade his relatively secure position against my participation in a now international but still precarious academic job market? What about common pension plans and savings? Like many other couples with one or both partners engaged in an academic career, we faced a “complicated decision that required us to try to balance both of our professional ambitions in light of what we believed was best for our family” (O’Brien Hallstein 111).

Regula Julia Leemann, who has conducted the most extensive studies on gender equality in the Swiss academy, is probably right to assume that “academic mothers are under more pressure to care about planning options and arrangements and finding compromises that are conceivable for the whole family” (Leemann “Gender Inequalities” 621) and not just for themselves. Participating in this workshop on academic mobility and family life before departing Switzerland at least confirmed that I was not the only one looking for answers to such questions.

Concluding Remarks

In order to retain talented researchers who happen to be parents in academic research, the Swiss academy needs to keep up with the progressive and efficient policies set up at the turn of the twenty-first century in the framework of the Federal Program for Gender Equality from which many concrete initiatives for promoting women’s academic careers derive. In addition to upholding and creating new policies and programs, changes in mentality are also needed, even if these might be more difficult to bring about. If specific support continues to be directed towards young women researchers, under the form of “*womentoring*” programs for instance, discussions about motherhood and its reconciliation with the imperative of an international stay abroad deserve a more central place, while also taking into account that some women do not wish to become mothers. In line with this, it is necessary that both the official rhetoric and the advice that early career scholars receive privately from a variety of mentors, both men and women, with or without children, move away from the tendency to blame leaving research solely on academic mothers by overstating their agency, which is rather limited. It would empower both early career and more advanced academic mothers to encounter fewer metaphors of sacrifice and fewer views of motherhood as a liability and as a privatized burden on the academic path.

Another helpful policy, which the SNSF already implements, allows greater flexibility for the effective start date of the stay abroad, with the hope that the host institution will be able to accommodate. Scholars who have been granted a fellowship may postpone for up to one year the effective start date of their stay abroad or of their return grant to Switzerland. While family planning is controllable to a certain extent, academic career planning may sound like an oxymoron to many researchers in the postdoctoral phase. Planning sometimes translates into concrete job applications and interviews, but many other times, it takes the form of wishful or positive thinking about an uncertain future. Academic mothers often have to deal with both family and career planning, simultaneously, with surprises along the way in both domains. In case of a

pregnancy, just a few months might make an enormous difference in being (physically, mentally and materially) able to accept a fellowship (or a tenure-track position), especially one that implies relocating one's family across international borders. Similarly, funding agencies notifying their applicants more quickly of acceptance or rejection would help them to more effectively make arrangements for their family. This would be especially helpful to those applicants who have an accompanying partner. With this in mind, funding agencies should consider research calendars as indicative rather than as strictly binding. It must be acknowledged, however, that other partners in the research project might not always show as much flexibility: a specific research lab or a department might plan to host only one fellow at that time and cannot allow him or her to arrive later; or the host professor with whom one plans on collaborating might be unavailable during a sabbatical.

Although Swiss institutions still have a lot to learn in terms of nondiscriminatory policies and family-friendly mindsets, Canadian funding agencies could also study some of the new tools recently implemented by the SNSF. For instance, women postdoctoral fellows may request an extra allowance for the explicit purpose of attending professional development and mentoring workshops. Another example is the "120% support grant," a new tool described in gender-neutral language on the SNSF website, that "is aimed at postdoctoral researchers who need to look after children during an important stage in their career and who therefore need more flexibility. The grant helps researchers to find the right balance between their academic career and family commitments by enabling part-time employment" (SNSF "120% Support Grant").

Concerning international mobility, other models could be developed, too, such as providing extra funds to cover the fees of any persons, even if they are not the spouse, accompanying the fellows abroad and taking up the responsibility of childcare. If establishing a support network of "othermothers" upon arrival to a new country and within a short span of time proves difficult, it may be possible to transport at least part of this network abroad to mitigate the effects of ex-matriation. Another possibility would be to reimburse effective daycare expenses rather than paying a lump sum as a child allowance.

An international research stay at the postdoctoral level undoubtedly brings benefits. However, it is legitimate to question the forms that mobility can take. Will it be accepted, in the future, that several short stays abroad or participation in collaborative transnational projects count as international experience for parents who cannot afford a continuous extended stay? Funding agencies could find other ways to make the international stay easier to access, even for scholars whose partner is not privileged enough to afford an unpaid leave and for single or divorced mothers. Unfortunately, in addition to the necessary selection based on a criterion of excellence, another form of social

preselection is taking place, informally, even before applications are sent. This does not serve the pursuit of scientific excellence in academic settings and does not empower mothers.

International mobility is an amazing step in career development. It is also, in many cases, a great experience for children and for one's partner, even if this is rarely acknowledged or talked about due to the tendency to silence personal stories. Motherhood complicates the equation in which locally established careers (that of the applicants or their partners) and financial security are well-known variables (O'Reilly): it places into the picture, often centrally, the children's lives, their health, their schooling, their adaptability to change, and their particular emotional attachments to other caregivers that academic ex-matriation disrupts. Without turning funding agencies into travel agencies specialized in family trips, a way to promote such international stays to researchers facing both the demands of an academic career and of parenting could be to make some more room for the voices ready to share personal and maternal experiences of academic mobility that, for the most part, are positive and empowering.⁶

¹In this context, being hired in a tenure track position as assistant professor right after or even before finishing one's PhD is extremely uncommon.

²The *2014 Annual Report*, available for download from the SNSF's website, features these and other statistics. Applicants must prove their ties to Swiss academic research, but Swiss citizenship is not a formal requirement.

³I am grateful to them for allowing me to use parts of our informal and constructive conversations for this article. For the purpose of protecting their privacy, I have omitted or changed identifying details in their personal stories that I have integrated within my own narrative, although without being able to fully embrace an autoethnographic approach within the limited scope of this article.

⁴Discriminations linked to sexual orientation, ethnicity, or class, have only recently entered the debates. Most considerations about equality or equal opportunity in Switzerland still focus exclusively on equality between men and women.

⁵In 2013, the SNSF changed the structure of some of these funding schemes. These fellowships are now known as "Early Postdoc.Mobility" and "Advanced Postdoc.Mobility." Spending most of the research time abroad still is a key requirement.

⁶I thank the Swiss National Science Foundation for funding my research stay through a Fellowship for Prospective Researcher (2012-2014) and an Advanced Postdoc.Mobility Fellowship (2014-2016). I am also grateful to the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto for hosting me during this international research stay.

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(Re)Turning to Motherhood and Academe

An Autoethnographic Account

Women attempting to balance childcare with work of tenure-track academic positions continue to face many barriers related to the ambiguous nature of tenure and promotion policies, the lack of personal and professional support as well as persistent strains related to role conflicts that emerge from demanding academic schedules in higher education (Ward and Wolf-Wendel “Academic Motherhood: Managing Complex Roles”). Although a growing documentation of these processes and their consequences for academic mothers or mothers who are also academics do exist, narratives of the struggles, tensions and possibilities for overcoming these processes remain under-researched and not well understood. The objective of this article therefore is to explore the meanings, experiences, and challenges of academic motherhood and the ways in which these can be negotiated. Using an autoethnographic approach, the article delves into a critical reflection of the processes and dynamics that shape the contexts within which I return to academe after turning to motherhood a second time around. Reflections point to the socio-cultural and institutional bases of these strains and put forward viable and empowering ways in which can they be navigated.

Introduction

Although the number of women who mother while in academe has been steadily increasing over the past few decades (Wolf-Wendel and Ward “Academic Life”; Carless), growing apprehensions among scholars remain over the expectations of, contradictions within, and difficulties encountered in combining their professional and childcare needs (Williams; Greenberg). The exit of academic mothers from academe due to the tensions of merging related

roles is also an issue of major concern (Mason and Goulden). With parallel trepidation for the simultaneous ticking of the tenure and biological clock (Wolf-Wendel and Ward *Academic Mothers*), researchers relate such trends to the often competing, intensive, and unbounded nature of both mothering and professing (O'Brien Hallstein and O'Reilly). In her work *Academic Mothering and the Unfinished Work of Feminism*, Susan Brown also advances the view that such complexities are created by the highly individualized nature of academe and its troubling effects on the academic engagement and performance of women who mother while in the academy.

However, although the socio-cultural, discursive contexts and related complexities that structure the experiences of academic mothers are increasingly documented, many questions remain as to how they think about, negotiate, and frame their practice of academic mothering. It is within such scholarly contexts that researchers call for greater explorations on the experiences, challenges, and strategies of women faculty (Amer; Connelly and Ghodsee), that capture the nuisances and choices that encircle motherhood and academe. For O'Brien Hallstein and O'Reilly "it is important to understand more fully contemporary academic motherhood—the ideas, institutional assumptions, and organizing systems that shape academic women's understanding of motherhood within academia—and mothering—a woman's desire to mother and her actual practices of mothering" (4). Where the voices of academic mothers are rarely taken notice of (Connelly and Ghodsee), the need for greater interrogation, understanding, and disclosure of that narrative remains.

The objectives of this article are therefore threefold. The article (i) explores the social and cultural perceptions of academic motherhood; (ii) examines the impact of these meanings on academic and maternal practices; and (iii) presents strategies for overcoming the challenges associated with working within these two spheres of influence. By reflecting on the processes by which I have returned to motherhood at a point when my research and writing have started to take form, I confront the socio-cultural bases of the tensions that emerge and analyze their impact on negotiating my return to motherhood while journeying as an emerging academic in the Caribbean. It is also my hope that such musing will provide much needed insights into the experiences of mothers in academe; an experience that is often overlooked and not well understood.

The paper is organized as follows: (i) a brief examination of the pertinent literature and scholarship surrounding existing understandings of academic motherhood; (ii) a justification for and benefits of autoethnography for storying the challenges of balancing motherhood and academe; (iii) a disclosure and discussion of the institutional and socio-cultural bases of these binds, and; (iv) the teasing out of strategies that can sustain healthy and empowering experiences for academic mothers.

Review of Related Literature

The challenges of combining a career in academe with motherhood have been well documented over the past couple of years (Mason and Goulden; Rosser and Taylor; O'Brien Hallstein and O'Reilly; Harper et al.). Indeed, the unbounded nature of these domains, the clash between notions of the ideal worker and mother as well as the institutional norm of disembodiment intensifies the challenges of balancing the two (Williams; O'Brien Hallstein and O'Reilly). In her seminal work *Unbending Gender*, Williams argues that the ideal-worker norm rests on an unrealistic assumption that workers are encumbered and that their families should operate around those normalized notions. Where gender ideology and division of labour stand at the heart of these troubling work standards, this view of the ideal worker remains therefore continually at variance with the norm of the selfless or sacrificial mother (Hughes; Swanson and Johnston). This situation is particularly problematic and frustrating for academic mothers who suffer from susceptibility to the cultural demands of motherhood and from the inherent contradictions and threats to their own identity that the integration of academic motherhood brings (Swanson and Johnston; Goode).

Another contentious issue that arises out of these discussions is whether academic mothers must choose between academic activities and those related to mothering, prioritize one over the other, or use the assumed academic flexibility, in whatever amount available, to balance the often conflicting and demanding tasks of motherhood and academe. Thus on the one hand, some researchers stress the complexities and problems of balancing motherhood and academe (Drago and Colbeck; Swanson and Johnston). On the other hand, other authors draw attention to the positive prospects and strategies for integrating the two (Evans and Grant; Mason and Ekman). In adopting a middle of the road position within such contestation, Connelly and Ghodsee posit that although it is "hard to achieve success in the academy ... it is not impossible" (11) as "there are many women in the academy who have successfully combined the two" (3).

In considering the possibilities for success, other scholars in the field also call for greater consideration of the presence or absence of family-friendly policies, the discourses that frame these, the degree of utilization of these policies, and the extent to which these policies are instituted and supported. Other concerns related to the role of agency in the process (that is, making the choice to have or not to have children during the tenure process) as well as the collective effects on the ways in which academic mothers negotiate the tensions between work and family domains also surface in these discussions (Phillipsen; Wolfinger and Goulden). However, given the persistence of existing

contestations in the literature, I am making a case for continued research on the thinking and practices of academic mothers to better discern the factors, dynamics, or conditions in which academic mothers work between the two. It is here that this article hopes to make a contribution.

Method

As a form of constructive inquiry, autoethnography delves into matters of and reflections on the social self; that is, how culture (re)shapes our experiences (Ellis and Bochner; Denzin and Lincoln). As a research method, autoethnographers use memory to critically reflect, assess, and make sense of the social nature of one's personal experiences (Chang). Embracing a postmodernist aspect of this method, therefore, helps to interrogate the cultural, structural, and ideological impact of certain norms and expectations on our own experiences.

My story is one of a mother of three, with an eleven-year-old daughter and my four-months-old twins, a boy and a girl. I am also a Caribbean migrant who moved from St. Lucia (located east of Barbados) to the more southern islands of Trinidad and Tobago (located north of Venezuela). Initially, I moved there to complete my doctoral studies in sociology. I have since remained, first, because of a job offer from a local university and subsequently, as a result of a second marriage to a native, who is also an academic at another regional university in Trinidad and Tobago.

For the past eight years, I have started an academic career within an education institute at a young, non-tenure university, with a heavy concentration on the teaching and training of in-service and pre-service teachers. Although the university is just over ten years old and lacks any formal policies for tenure and promotion, faculty members remain subjected to assessment regimes, which demand high levels of productivity across teaching, research, and community service spheres.

Since my entry into academe, I have entered into a professional learning trajectory that forces me to assess the social, institutional, and personal issues that affect my ability to negotiate mothering and professing. The recent birth of my twins has intensified these evaluative moments. I use the intricacies of autoethnography to reflect on what Ellis, Adams, and Bochner call *facets of cultural experiences* and to extend their work by unpacking the myriad of ways in which my socio-cultural backgrounds continue to influence my engagement with academe and motherhood. To do this, I combine the use of personal memory (identification of major events, their significance) with that of self-observation and self-reflection. Reflections were captured through the use of journaling over three months to record my thoughts on the experiences of motherhood after the birth of my twins and the implications

for my intended return to academe six months after the start of maternal leave. Although I am aware that this approach requires “multiple layer of consciousness” (Denzin and Lincoln, 739) that may produce inherent vulnerabilities associated with self-disclosing (Ellis and Bochner), I embrace the possibility that using an authentic voice can enrich discussions on the prospects for survivability, negotiability, and sustainability.

Confronting the Mêlée

In facing the *mêlée*—the conflicts associated with bridging the spheres of mothering and professing—I continuously grapple with powerful structures or institutions and cultural processes that simultaneously frame my own experiences and/or ability to work within the domains of work and family. When frictions emerge out of clashing social and cultural frameworks, I am also compelled to come to terms with the paradoxes of being an academic mother. I, however, use these moments as reflective opportunities whereby I can critically weigh in on the options for alternative action.

“Easier said than done” is an old adage that captures the breadth and depth of the gains, strains, and contradictions that have shaped my experiences so far. To be an academic mother with three children means having to rearrange my time, redirect my energies and increase my efforts at finding viable alternatives for balancing my family and work-related roles rather than choosing one over the other. Before the arrival of the twins, the idea of a balance or achieving some measure of a workable equilibrium seemed quite feasible. Of course, all of these plans depended heavily on the assumption that I would have some degree of influence over the dynamics within which I would engage; this conjecture would prove faulty.

The situation was also far more complex. With the coming of my twins, the conscious decision to supplement the use of formula with breast milk for the first six months, the reality of having few family members around, and the growing inability to do anything outside of caring for the children for the first month, I began to rethink my plans for writing within the first few months of their lives. Thus, approximately one month after the birth of my twins, that is, on February 20, I penned the following in my post-pregnancy journal:

I am up for a 2:00 a.m. feed. I start with breastfeeding one and allow my husband to bottle feed the other with the hope that I will switch for the next feeding time. It is now 4:30 a.m., my son is asleep, so too is his dad, but I am still up with my baby daughter and honestly I have no clue what time I will go to bed. I do hope that it is before my son awakes for his next feed. With that in mind, I try rocking her

with the hope that she will fall asleep soon. While pacing the living room, I cannot help but think of how this will all affect my academic work load, progress, and overtime plans.

At that very moment, I thought about the requirements for nurturing and caring for the twins, my older preteen daughter, *and* for sustaining the frequency and intensity of my research agendas. I also reflected on the intensity of caring for the twins and what that would mean for me and my performance as an academic. I mulled then at the idea of taking a personal sabbatical. In so doing, it was clear that there were no regrets concerning the decision to bring forth another child (although I actually got two). At that time (when I initially thought about returning to motherhood), I consciously acknowledged the need to stabilize my own academic productivity with that of being reproductive and family oriented.

In locating such a position of “inbetweenity,” I acknowledged then the significance and impact of my own religious and social upbringing on my decision of when and why I should return to motherhood. In that regard, I saw the act of bearing children under the institution of marriage as a central religious message and an expectation that resonated with my second marriage. In this sense, motherhood is socially scripted as a feminine imperative supported by biblical interpretations; a notion accepted by many of my close friends and family members. However, although I support the notion that mothering as a practice becomes a translation of the moral representations of oneself (May; Brock), I adopted a position of respect and tolerance for the religious beliefs or groundings of my family, the close knit orientation of my relatives, and that of my childhood church community. At the same time, I also understood the individual desires of my partner to have children of his own and the need for me to adjust my own scholarship amidst these emerging circumstances.

Now, I do concede that such a middle-of-the-road position introduces a certain level of ambivalence and to some extent intensifies the tensions that accompany this need to strike a balance. Working within these spaces of tensions has been full of paradoxes. Thus, as I attempt to work with some of the expectations of motherhood and to take pleasure in watching my babies grow, I also come to terms with my reduced levels of academic productivity and the disadvantageous academic position that I now occupy. In that regard, I am mindful of the observation that being a mother to young twins has increasingly affected my use of time and my ability to draw on the already-limited time to engage in some degree of academic work while I care for them. Between the feedings and the long hours spent soothing them, I really have no time. Any time is their time. So I wrote on March 1:

The kids are nearly two months old but the intensity of caring for them hasn't really subsided. I am still up every two hours at nights; rotate my time with them in between and barely get time to care for myself during the day, far less to do anything else. I rush to get something done while they are asleep but those times aren't even guaranteed as they occasionally surprise me with a cry or two for help. They call for my presence. Have I forgotten what is involved in caring for a baby? Am I expecting too much too soon or am I carrying the burden of my career concerns on my experience of being a mother a second time around? Uhhh, perhaps it all of the above....

Such difficulties were also compounded by the constant reminder (from close friends and family members) of the need to provide primary care and to secure a maternal bond that nothing else or no other person could offer. On one specific occasion, a close relative uttered: "kids are more attached to their mothers so you can more easily pacify them when they cry than their fathers." Although I do not subscribe to these beliefs and support the need for paternal involvement in childrearing, I recognize that in the Caribbean, these internalized socially-constructed imperatives for mothering remain deeply seated in the legacies of early colonial and patriarchal systems that continue to shape gender roles and identity (Black-Chen). What remains is the understanding and acceptance that childbearing and rearing is a natural part of Caribbean women's lives (Barrow; Mohammed and Perkins). The paradox is that these cultural expectations coexist with the increasing participation of women in the labour market, albeit a market persistently segregated along sex lines (Seguino; Massiah). In such ambiguous contexts, I also take in the weight of these cultural expectations, the social justifications that encircle these, and their collective impact on academic mothers in such patriarchal contexts.

Moving Forward

Although the struggle for balance among academic mothers remains contentious, many prospects for integration exist (Connelly and Ghodsee; Ward and Wolf-Wendel "Choice and Discourse"). In moving forward, I continue to deliberate over the need to strike a balance between what is best for all concerned. Here, I acknowledge the understanding that entering into such a perfect storm and aspiring for some notion of a balance remains a problematic one (O'Brien Hallstein and O'Reilly; Mason and Ekman). At the centre of this conflict is the issue of prioritization: when, where, how, and why should we prioritize academic mothers. The normative or expected answer is that we must choose one over another. In resisting this stance, I embrace a more flexible

view that supports the need to prioritize when necessary (based on the weight of the related demands from the respective domains) and in other times, to strike a sustainable balance between the two roles. This sense of fluidity is also consistent with research findings that point to the ways in which many other academic mothers embrace some degree of changeability that helps them work between their professional and personal life (Collins). To achieve some level of balance between my roles of a mother and academic, I use and benefit to some extent from a myriad of social structures and processes. These include my connection with professional and social networks, the use of daycare services provided by a nearby registered centre, and the occasional use of introspection as periods of reflection.

Professional Networks

Professional networks provide a useful strategy for women desiring success while in academe (Buller; Connelly and Ghodsee). As part of two informal networks of professional women in higher education—Caribbean Educators’ Research Initiative (CURVE) and Researchers in Education, Network, and Dialogue (FRiENDS)—I have (i) received space for cross-institution, cross-discipline and cross-racial collaboration; (ii) accessed mentoring in writing, researching, collaborating, and publishing; (iii) received ongoing social support during that process; (iv) attended more conferences; (v) learned other related skills such as writing grants, delivering workshops, and preparing book proposals, and; (vi) found avenues for working outside the norms and constraints of academe while simultaneously increasing my productivity. This experience is of particular significance given my experience in a young national university, which lacks guidelines and processes for tenure or promotion.

Despite the social capital gains from these networks, I acknowledge that at an institutional level my experiences as an academic mother are also controlled by the growing demands for standardized performance assessments combined with that of neoliberal calls for accountability, productivity, effectiveness, and credibility within higher education (Careless). This is also coupled with the lack of family-friendly policies and social-support systems within the university in general. As an emerging scholar within an institutional context, I am also subjected to contradictions and inconsistencies that lie between the process of commodifying higher education and that of indigenizing; developing a curriculum that suits the cultural, socio-political, and economic realities of Trinidad and Tobago. These inconsistencies engender a growing sense of apprehension particularly when demands for productivity do not come with increased institutional support for scholarly activities and transparent promotion practices.

Social Support

Social support —phone calls, extended stays, Skype, ooVoo video chat, and Google hangouts—from close family, particularly close friends and family also serve as a useful source of intervention. Thus, despite living and working in St. Lucia, my mom for instance, frequently visits to provide needed help with the day-to-day management of the twins and other related tasks. My husband also plays a critical role in making sense of this all. As an academic and a first-time father, he is also fully engaged in an active work life based around his love for sports and his commitment to the scholarship of sports sociology. On many levels therefore, he understands the impact of having children at this point in our professional lives. Although this concern is an ongoing one, he remains generally supportive of my research agenda. As I wrote on February 27:

Another sleepless night. I have twin two at this time—my son. Although he is not so much of a fussy baby, he surely loves bodily contact. So I grant him that; I hold him against my chest and he sleeps but I wait another thirty minutes before laying him down with the fear that he may wake again. It is during these thirty minutes that I take time to admire him, to appreciate my blessings; a moment to give and to receive. It is then that I remind myself of the challenges and sacrifices ahead.... Indeed, dealing with these challenges would involve some amendments, some reprioritizing of my academic plans, and some creative use of different strategies. This is something that requires not just will power but also support. I must admit, for now, I have that in my husband. He usually wakes to help with or accompanies me during nursing moments or holds either baby as the need arises.... He has also taken up the task of dropping off my older daughter to school and picking up her on afternoons. These actions I truly appreciate as dealing with the twins and an older daughter requires some management of our time and sharing of responsibilities.

His status as a first time father and his caring nature also make these dynamics workable. This cooperation allows us to share, with much enthusiasm, the observation of milestones and periods of transition. It also enables a casual shift from discussions over the welfare and the growth of the children to the status and dynamics involved in pursuit of scholarship. On the other hand, his novice status as a father, and usual critical sense as an academic, also comes with a few restrictions in so far as I have to justify certain actions as it relates to the twins. At these times, I make a conscious choice as to which battles to take on and which ones to let go. I also remind myself that he too is experiencing his own learning curve relating to fatherhood.

In *Outlaw(ing) Motherhood*, O'Reilly insists that the challenge for theorists and activists of maternal empowerment is to “affirm the necessary work of social reproduction ... while at the same time insisting that culture, which

includes fathers, must likewise assume responsibility for reproductive labour” (28). I also assert that such transformation requires some consideration of the psycho-social conditions and situational circumstances that shape the thinking and practices of fathers in certain contexts. Outside of early anthropological research (1950s-1970s) on the Caribbean, which was defined by monolithic and functionalist understandings of the family, the Caribbean remains an open and unexplored scholarly space as it relates to fatherhood and the cultural norms that surround the thinking and practices therein. Where gendered and deep-seated patriarchal relations in the household are present, then, this would also necessitate some complex negotiations between partners and within households (Baker). Indeed, these forms of social support remain critical for professional advancement (Saunders, Therrien, and Williams). In integrating the personal and the professional, Buller also supports the need for academics to create or seek alternative career paths that deviate from institutional models. This continues to be a significant dynamic that is under-researched, particularly in societies like the Caribbean, where there is an absence of research that captures the dynamics of institutional cultures that shape academic experience and any formalized advocacy for academic mothers.

Daycare Services

I must admit that I have fears and harbour some guilt based on my growing attachment to my children and my own internalization of the discourse that surround understandings of the bond between a mother and her child. For now, as an academic mother, I make use of a registered childcare facility that helps me to better manage conflicting and demanding tasks related to academe. I am aware of the wider perception, however, at the local level, that the use of a daycare facility is seen as less desirable than the care offered by the mother. I recognize that these views are tied to the social construction of the responsibilities of the good mother, expectations of sacrifice and devotion, and the growing justifications of the need for mother-child attachment based on the prospects for enhancing the health and social well-being of the children. I also note the many reservations around the issue of using paid childcare and the consequence of these on women who sacrifice their success at work to maximize the responsibilities in the home (Williams *Reshaping the Work and Family Debate*).

While I comfort myself with evidence showing the long-term benefits of caretakers (Swanson and Johnston), I still take notice of the ways in which the need for balance increases the tensions between maternal and professional sustainability. Hence, even as I write this, I am also troubled by my upcoming lecture in the evening program for part-time students and the lack of evening

care (or even immediate assistance from family), which is needed to execute this teaching assignment with some peace of mind. I am also disheartened that despite the absence of family-friendly policies at my centre, the following trends occur regularly: (i) there is little consideration is given to the challenges faced by academic mothers with children; (ii) there is a general failure to move away from decision making based on the whims or predispositions of those in charge, and; (iii) senior administrative personnel and other colleagues, particularly women, have not identified with the value of resisting disembodied notions of academic scholarship. As a result, academic mothers, like me, are disadvantaged because they cannot negotiate for alternate options that would secure them more flexibility to successfully perform both roles.

The emphasis is on the need to provide accessible courses and flexible times to students based on traditional understandings of the physical classroom rather than on the need to provide programs that complement the family structures and processes, be it for students or staff. This lack of flexibility and openness on the part of those who shape the teaching schedules within the institution, (both male and female faculty) and those who can make help accommodate academic mothers in similar situations is one that remains unquestioned and under-theorized in such context. This troubling situation can be likened to what Williams and Segal identify as experiencing a maternal wall that emerges when a woman seeks a modified schedule before or after pregnancy. Although existing theories links these academic experiences to the presence of gendered structural barriers, little research has addressed the persistence of such cultural and at times institutionalized thinking among administrators and academic colleagues, the gendered nature of these differences, and the implications for maternal scholars. More research is also needed on the underlying structures of academic and gendered norms (Morrisey and Schmidt) that operate even at the organizational levels. In this case, the socio-political contexts remain central to the parameters that frame my coping strategies. This is a visible empirical gap in organizational literature.

Introspection

As major advocates for autoethnography as a qualitative method, Bochner and Ellis posit that it shows “people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live and what their struggles mean” (111). In many ways, this critical self-reflection has been empowering. I have teased out the complexities of my identity in relation to others and to the cultures that have informed my own thinking and practice as an academic mother. One end result of this process is that I have begun to also examine in greater detail the role of my inner strength, determination, and tolerance for difference in this process of

negotiation. I am aware that this state of mind may result in many sleepless nights, social rejection at times, feelings of frustration, tiredness and perhaps even an occasional sense of feeling overwhelmed. With that, I note the need to contend with close relatives who promote sacrificial mothering practices, whether stated or implied, and at times to engage in this practice as an attempt to defuse a situation of mounting tension.

I also contend that achieving some degree of balance between mothering and professing as a form of a third space, particularly with young children, remains a moving target that has to be continuously (re)negotiated, (re)defined, and (re)positioned. As I prepare for my return to academe in the coming weeks, I attempt to form a sense of self that internalizes yet simultaneously resists the good mother discourse. This for me requires a continuous need to (re)think and (re)position my own maternal thinking and practices to align them with what my professional life requires and vice versa. Although I am aware of the hegemonic ideologies and misunderstandings of academic mothers, I also see this middle-of-the-road position as necessary given the need to calm the many social and professional tensions that can emerge from such contexts. This type of “inbetweenity” I see as a fragile and fluid process with no absolute outcomes and where there is a need to present a mask of motherhood that is loosely fused with that of academe. This is I perceive, not at a mark of weakness or a deficit, but as a mark of inner strength and personal growth. Although this type of ambivalence is not the main objective of the paper, it is certainly one that also requires greater theorizing.

Conclusions

Even though the notion that mothering supersedes that of professing is a widely held one, the idea that women can strike a balance between the two is still widely dismissed. These doubts that emerge out of the growing volume of literature point to the clashing norms of motherhood and academe, which shape the troubling experiences of mothers in the professoriate (Swanson and Johnston; Mason and Ekman; O’Brien Hallstein and O’Reilly). But mothering while professing is not an impossible task (Swanson and Johnson; Connelly and Ghodsee). The objective of the paper was to question the extent in which the norms of motherhood shape one’s engagement with academe and to deepen the understanding of the fluidity the surrounds negotiating the practices of academic mothering.

Using an autoethnographic approach, my reflections have highlighted the need to navigate multiple expectations, discourses, identities, biases, and challenges related to socially acceptable and institutionalized norms surrounding motherhood and academe. The use of this method has demonstrated not only

the persistent and troubling nature of these idealized norms but also the need to be resourceful in surviving these intricacies. In essence, this chapter typifies a story of reflection, connection, construction, reconstruction, and ongoing transformation. Although my insights cannot be extended or generalized beyond the experiences described in this personal narrative, they become useful in centring explicit knowledge and practices, particularly for others who may be able to connect to similar experiences. It is with such an understanding of this dynamic process that I support the need for more fluid theorizing, negotiating, networking, and enacting that can enhance and sustain the ways in which women within higher education think about and practice academic motherhood.

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Interrogating the Language of Diversity in Academe

Mothering and Parenting in View

In this article, we are interested in the ways in which one of the major obstacles to maternal empowerment and gender equity in academe—hetero-patriarchal sexism—is manifested through language. The official language of an institution holds within it the underlying logic of that same organization, and the official language and rhetoric of academe tend to be very revealing. In much of North America, the ideological blueprint underlying academic discourse on curriculum, hiring, and promotion, has been Eurocentric, male-centred, and heterosexist. Given the origins and genealogies of universities, none of these things should come as a surprise; it is their persistence, however, that we seek to trouble in this article. How do such structures of normativity continue to manifest themselves today? How have attempts to reroute, rewrite, and undermine normativity been contained or subsumed by academic institutions? By reading questions of racialization and gendering to inquire into hiring practices, spousal appointment policies, and teaching evaluation policies, we look to the broad politics of academic institutions in order to suggest that there remains much work to be done to dismantle hetero-patriarchal sexism in academe.

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to trouble in this article. How do such structures of normativity continue to manifest themselves today? How have attempts to reroute, rewrite, and undermine normativity been contained or subsumed by academic institutions? By reading questions of racialization and gendering to inquire into hiring practices, spousal appointment policies, and teaching evaluation policies, we look to the broad politics of academic institutions in order to suggest that there remains much work to be done to dismantle hetero-patriarchal sexism in academe.

The North American landscape of academic institutional diversification has grown exponentially in the last five decades. Antiracist, feminist, LGBTQ, and other social movements in and outside of academe have been significant catalysts to this growth, and analyses and principles born of these movements now permeate and even shape the language and policies of institutional diversification in many Canadian and U.S. universities. Nonetheless, a distinct and observable problem persists in this academic domain, one that we can examine from two vantage points. First, the tendency of diversity statements to reproduce, in their language, the exclusivity against which they are meant to work; and, second, the persistent gap between diversity statements or official policy (such as it may be) and a concrete manifestation of change. The gap between the discursive terrain of institutional diversification and its meaningful implementation and practice is something that still bears further thought and inquiry. The following, for instance, is the standard hiring language used in our institution, an institution which hires on the basis of merit and is strongly committed to fostering diversity as a source of excellence, intellectual and cultural enrichment, and social strength:

We welcome applications from those who would contribute to the further diversification of our staff, faculty and their scholarship including but not limited to Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and persons of any sexual orientation or gender identity, ethnic, national or socio-economic background, religion or age. (“Faculty Career Opportunity” 2014)

While the language is perhaps laudable (one might debate the specific details here), what is striking is how this statement highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion without, at the same time, demonstrating how such goals might be achieved. Rather than be waylaid by the debates that already surround affirmative action hiring, we instead wish to note that a lack of will and relevant knowledge, insufficient resources, conscious or unconscious racism, heterosexism, homophobia, and an idea that merit can be a neutral concept may all play a part in curbing the concrete implementation and practice of such espoused diversity goals in academic institutions.

That being said, we would also do well to take a step back and subject the language of diversity itself to some scrutiny, since the content of such language, along with the norms of an organization's communication practices, is often a telling predictor of the likelihood of the effective and substantive institutional diversification practices that we espouse. Communication, the set of symbolic and linguistic systems that allow us to "produce, interpret, share meaning . . . and create reality" (Allen 10), is key in shaping the social and material realities of inclusion and exclusion. In the academic workplace, the landscape of belonging, success, failure, and exclusion is influenced by discursive and communicative practices (institutional and interpersonal) that construct the boundaries of community and that shape existing differences in how people experience the social reality of community membership. These practices of communication are themselves channelled through power dynamics that reveal organizational patterns of competition and contestation as "different groups strive to service their own interests and to control various resources" (Allen 11). Official discourses interact with daily practices to produce and reproduce systems that may be unwittingly exclusive; even the language of inclusion often assumes a common norm into which differing bodies might be included, rather than a norm that itself may need to be radically changed or rejected.

The organizational culture of academic institutions is, indeed, characterized by explicit and unwritten "common norms" regarding the values and mission of the community, as well as by the nature of an institution's professional structure and the criteria set for succeeding and advancing within such organizations. This situation should hardly be surprising; mechanisms of control "are infused throughout meaning systems, including narratives and discourse, and contribute to the more 'hidden' forms of conflict in organizations" (Farley-Lucas). Yet how this control manifests itself in academe is important to note. Academic institutional cultures in Canada and the U.S.—that Allen argues continue to be steeped in ideologies of domination, patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity, as well as class-based meritocracy and neoliberal forms of capitalist consumption and austerity—often require community members (as a measure of their success within the organization) to internalize a logic that favours dominant group interests and favours the members of those same dominant groups (Allen 2011). This structure of domination increases the likelihood that a language of institutional diversification developed within this context will be symptomatic rather than critical of existing power relations and imbalances.

Forms of communication that shape people's experiences of institutional inclusion and exclusion come in a variety of forms. These experiences can include discussions of a "good fit" among hiring committees—where "recruitment [often] functions as a technology for the reproduction of whiteness" (Ahmed

39) and heterosexism—operationalized through interpersonal communication among privileged institutional gatekeepers. Methods of informal surveillance communicated through one-off or passing comments—for example, “I haven’t seen you around much lately”—may be particularly distressing to academic mothers, many of whom already struggle with the anxiety of presumed professional unreliability and incompetence (Farley-Lucas). Mothers, visible minorities, and others whose bodies and subject positions do not conform to the invisible norms of the institution carry a heavy responsibility “for proving their sameness, [and] eradicating any questions about their competence, credibility, and worth in the face of heightened scrutiny” (Anderson 164). The weight of such pressure to successfully fit institutional norms and *stage* competence is particularly high for those situated at the cross-section of multiple low-ranked social identity markers (for instance, a woman of colour/mother/queer-identified, see Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012). The historically rooted presumption of incompetence associated with the aforementioned intersecting identity markers means that there is pressure, for some, to continuously stage competence (through dominant discursive formats), in addition to their actual practice of it. Such discursive formations operate below the radar of stated intent to create gendered—as well as heterosexist, racialized, and ableist—contexts of interpretation for terms such as professional, achievements, and exemplary (Anderson 164). There is also the communicative context of “nonverbal cues of power” (Allen 37). Meeting times, lack of childcare support and facilities, having to pay to work (for instance having to pay for childcare out of pocket in order to attend additional workplace events—orientations, retreats, conferences, semi-mandatory celebratory events and parties), and the “freezing out” of mothers from informal and formal opportunities that lead to workplace advancement and promotion based on a silently presumed unreliability or lack of collegiality are all examples of the non-verbal communicative context of exclusion. These conditions are also acutely felt by single mothers, who seldom have recourse to immediate or extended family support with childcare when additional workplace expectations beckon, given that academic workers often live at a distance from their extended personal communities of support.

The Racialized and Gendered Academy

In the Canadian context, and within the realm of institutional diversification, the issue that has drawn perhaps the most attention and has been best documented to date has been that of gendered disparities. We will discuss the stark differences between men and women faculty below, but it seems crucial to note from the outset that there remains a dearth of women faculty at the most senior ranks in Canadian universities, and the wage gap between men

and women faculty, which remained at 11 percent in 2006, is all too revealing (Can. Teachers “The Persistent Gap”). In this context, the University of British Columbia’s decision in 2013 to provide 2 percent pay increases to all women faculty on the tenure-stream (Bradshaw), along with that of McMaster University in 2015 to raise the salaries of women faculty by \$3,515 (Casey), strike us as an important step to bridging this divide. Yet, persistent problems continue to surface, such as the debate about gender equity when the Canada Research Chairs program was launched and an overwhelming percentage (eighty-six) of men was appointed—a program that was subsequently successfully challenged on the grounds of human rights discrimination (Side and Robbins; Robbins). That successful challenge was overwritten by the new, even more prestigious Canada Excellence in Research Chairs program, which currently supports nineteen academics, only one of whom is a woman (“Canada Excellence Research Chairholders”; Robbins). At the top of the academic echelon, men continue to dominate.

We wish, however, to go beyond a focus on gender alone in employing an intersectional analysis. As antiracist Canadian scholars Frances Henry and Carol Tator appropriately point out, “almost all universities declare a commitment to antiracism, diversity, and equity in their mission statements; however, mission statements and policies in themselves have little to do with implementing substantive change” (14). Even a cursory look at the current state of equity implementation in Canadian universities substantiates this statement. The feminizing of academic labour by shifting a large portion of a discipline’s teaching to contract and part-time labour, the still paltry representation of women, and particularly women of colour, in full professorial and high-ranking administrative positions, and the continued under-representation of people of colour in full-time faculty positions are all, among other factors, symptomatic of the failure to effectively implement equity and diversity on the ground.

Simply having women in these positions is not, on its own, a wholesale solution to the problem, either. Census Canada studies indicate that women continue to shoulder the larger burden of responsibility for childcare, child rearing, and housework (Milan, Keown, and Robles Urquijo). This burden is reflected in the anxieties of women on the academic job market: should one divulge a prospective or current pregnancy during a job interview? Is not doing so, despite the clear human rights issues at hand, dishonest? Can a woman faculty member specify her teaching and service hours to match her children’s school schedule without the penalty of negative peer judgment? Will missing meetings that are scheduled before 9:00 a.m. or that run beyond 5:00 p.m. be taken to reflect a lack of commitment to the job? While the number of fathers in the academy who grapple with the last two questions may be on the rise, these problems overwhelmingly remain the anxiety-producing concerns

and internal dialogues of academic women. Fathers in academia or on the job market are still largely assumed to have a wife/partner at home, who will ensure that their family lives do not interfere with the normative expectations and demands of the profession. If academic fathers do not have a wife/partner at home, they are lauded for being modern men who shoulder a symbolic burden in solidarity with their women peers. In many ways, North American academic institutions retain a traditional definition of success or of the real academic: a middle-class, heterosexual, white man, or anyone who can as closely as possible mimic the conventions of this identity. Such measure of normative success can become evident in the publish-or-perish cultures of many academic institutions, which value quantity over quality; many scholars, particularly junior ones on the tenure stream, feel pressured to write papers that they are not necessarily committed to just to meet the numerical expectations for tenure. The white, masculine norm of academia—characterized by individualism, competition, long hours, years of uninterrupted employment, and professional visibility both in the workplace and at conferences—indicates that the organization of academic work is constructed around family ideologies that favour traditionally masculine identities (Ramsay 34). In terms of university policy that aims to support diversity and work-life balance, the persisting assumption of a strict separation and fragmentation of private and public spheres of life, long criticized by feminists, has been a key barrier to a meaningful implementation of equity and work-life balance.

The biases influencing hiring committees, the wider masculine culture of most academic institutions, and the related personal choices of candidates contributes to the high number of women PhDs teaching at community colleges and working in the lower academic rungs of universities. This reality conveniently fits the contemporary landscape of popular public discourse around women's (empowered) personal choice to opt-out, scale back, or slow down. The masculine norms and values of most academic institutions will certainly contribute to the decision on the part of more than a few women to reduce their professional ambitions in an attempt to create greater work-life balances in the context of workplaces that will penalize them for doing so, even in the case of community colleges or teaching-focused undergraduate universities. And, indeed, a college or teaching-focused position can hardly be deemed to be less demanding than a full-time position at a research-intensive university. The heavy teaching load, class sizes, office hours and meetings with students, grading and service requirements, and expectations of continued research and publication may in the end not allow for any more time and balance than one might expect at a research institution.

The overrepresentation of white men as tenured faculty in many Canadian and U.S. universities, their numerical dominance on hiring, tenure, and pro-

motion committees, and in administration, is a key though not lone factor in, for the time being, perpetuating the heterosexist WASP values at the core of academic institutional cultures (in spite of those white men in those roles who are able to work as allies). Women have entered higher education in increased numbers over the past two decades, currently outnumbering men as both students and staff at some Canadian and U.S. institutions. The employment figures, when examined without attention to rank, show that women may be becoming dominant in the academic labour force. Nevertheless, even while the numbers support a cultural anxiety that women are “taking over” the academy, a trend that is feminizing the overall culture of academe in their favour (Leathwood and Read 176), the challenges that we identify persist. Viewing the raw numbers as a sign of equality, of course, misses the concentration of women in lower-paying, lower-ranked positions across employment sectors, academe included. We can additionally examine the increasing feminization of the academic labour force in the context of an unflinchingly masculine academic institutional structure and culture. Take, for instance, the shift towards part-time and contract labour in many universities. This cost-cutting measure shifts more and more of the bulk of academic instruction to part-time workers, who are not given the benefit of a regular salary, regular benefits, or a sense of employment stability. These working conditions represent a feminization of university instruction, regardless of the sex or gender of the person performing this labour. This feminized, neoliberal trend in higher education is anchored in a traditionally masculine economic framework witnessed in the explosive growth of university administrative structures run largely by men. That more male faculty are now vulnerable to the exploitative dynamics of precarious forms of employment does not indicate that women are on top or that we are entering a “women’s market” or an actual shift away from sexist trends. Rather, we are seeing an overall feminization of labour under a long-established and thriving masculine economic ethic: the move towards increasingly precarious forms of academic labour demonstrates precisely the retrenchment of neoliberal patriarchal structures. Academic cultures situated in this economic context may, indeed, be more feminized today, but not in a feminist sense (Leathwood and Read). Women remain a minority in academic positions of power and continue to be underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated disciplines such as the sciences and engineering (Can. Teachers “Narrowing the Gender Gap”). The heterosexist and Eurocentric foundational norms, values, and structure of the university remain in place, while continuing trends in the exploitative feminization of labour (reflected in part in the simplistically presented female to male employment ratios) are used to suggest the progress, if not the unfair advantage, of women in the current workforce. This is not the diversification and employment equity that many of us were hoping for, and as UK-based

scholars Carole Leathwood and Barbara Read rightly argue, this kind of women's advancement discourse still "ignores the myriad structural and cultural barriers that women academics face, relating to the dominant cultural construction of the academic as 'masculine'" (175).

Spousal Appointment Policies and Politics as a Site of Intersection

If Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and ableism have been core to the development and foundations of academic institutions in Canada and the U.S., then it is important to recognize these elements as interlocking relations (Ng) that in various ways function to assimilate or punish a wide range of people whose experiences are situated in some tension relative to those academic norms. Spousal hires, for instance, have long been a contentious issue in academe, prompting concerns surrounding meritocracy, fairness, the maintenance of academic rigour, the autonomy of academic units, and nepotism (Eisenkraft). The issue is even more complicated, for instance, for same-sex couples who, more so than heterosexual couples, and in spite of federal non-discrimination laws and legalized same-sex marriage in Canada and some U.S. states, bear a greater burden of proving their spousal status and face the worry of homophobia upon disclosure. Spousal hiring is a core issue framing work and family lives for many academics and postsecondary instructors. Canadian universities, in their myriad of approaches to this issue, have been forced over the years to acknowledge this aspect of family life as a persisting reality of the academic labour force (Eisenkraft), requiring some measure of collective discussion and protocol at the administrative levels. This task is not an insignificant one because "faculty are voting with their feet [and] going to universities where they are hiring dual-career couples" (DuBois). Spousal hiring is a recruitment, retention, equity, and life balance issue that is uncomfortable to many in direct proportion to the degree to which it unsettles key assumptions in the traditionally masculinist and heterosexist blueprint of academe. For example, the assumptions can run as follows: merit, as a value-neutral concept, can only be determined through open competition. Family is a personal and therefore separate matter from the academic's professional life; all "serious" academics, according to this line of thought, know how to keep these worlds always separate, and therefore should not make personal appeals in a professional context. As a result, any personal ties taken into consideration in the context of hiring are nepotistic and threaten the overall quality of the institution. The underlying assumption is that there are only fairness and objectivity at play in the regular hiring process and that the candidates with the most merit always get the job. This assumption more or less dictates the (androcentric) assumption that academics maintain compartmentalized lives. The profession, family, and life

as a whole should, in this logic, remain an amalgam of separate compartments, with professional commitment and success defined by the separation of the professional sphere from the others. Finally, this logic ends in mistaking merit with fairness and equates the hiring of qualified spouses with the nepotistic “spill over” of the emotive personal sphere into the rational professional realm. The clear gendering of these categories should indeed give us pause. While academics remain entitled, as are employees in other sectors, to protections of their privacy, at the same time the assumption that the personal and the professional ought never to intersect (or ought to be performed in particular ways) leads to a ruling out of the notion of spousal hiring without any serious interrogation of its benefits.

University administrators and policies have had to catch up to the reality that academics will leave their positions in order to preserve the integrity of their personal lives. To a large extent, current university spousal hiring practices largely function as recruitment and retention tools that favour academic “stars” rather than as commitments to work-life balance and equity for faculty as a whole. This approach constructs a deserving class of academics according to questionable norms of success—namely, a large quantity of research publications and grants, among other factors. Thus while the increasing acknowledgement from many universities of the need to implement formal or informal procedures for spousal hires reflects a positive step in the right direction, these procedures, in practice, have not yet moved beyond androcentric and heterosexist norms of achievement, which remain dominant in many academic institutions (Eisenkraft).

If it is relatively straightforward to understand how and why spousal hiring policies may be important recruitment and retention issues, it may be less immediately apparent how these issues affect equity and work-life balance. How does spousal hiring speak directly to these two factors? The capacity to sustain the family of one’s choice is a good place to begin thinking about spousal hiring as an equity issue. Should securing a tenure-track position mean, as it already has for so many, deciding between a job and having children? Most university administrators are likely to be, in principle, against employment conditions that prevent desiring faculty from planning for and having children. Yet the choice between job or children is one facing many dual-career academic couples forced to live in different cities or even countries from one another (Eisenkraft). One previously tenure-track scholar noted that if she or her husband could not find employment in the same place, then, at some point, “the window on having kids will close,” and that, she states, “is a high price to pay for what is, at the end of the day, just a job” (Ledohowski). Couples in this situation also lose money on travel or unpaid leaves taken to sustain the relationship. If the academic “stars” are more likely to secure spousal hires, the

result is inequitable access to family life, work-life balance, and to possibilities for well-being among academics as a whole, particularly for those in junior and low visibility positions—where women, queer-identified people, disabled people, and people of colour are situated more often than not. Over the long term, these inequalities and conditions of work can affect not only the shape and experience of one’s family, but also the capacity of faculty members to invest in their home lives and to build community and social networks in their cities of residence. In also pointing to some of the gendered implications of this issue, Lindy Ledohowski, a tenure-track faculty member at an Ontario university in 2010 at the time of the following statement, puts the problem clearly: “I’m a realist. So what I think will happen is that I will end up leaving academia, and I will try to find work doing something else, and I will be one more female statistic who compromises her own academic and professional goals.... But at the end of the day, I would rather have my marriage than my job. And I just wish that academia didn’t ask me to make that choice” (Ledohowski). Those concerned about the “star” syndrome are cautious to adopt an unequivocally pro-spousal-hiring position and are quick to point out the potential inequities and abuses that can result in the context of a desperate job market and will query the possibly questionable practice of favouring some candidates over others. But these challenges set up the discussion of spousal hiring as a simple “yes” or “no” policy issue rather than as an acknowledgement of its overall value in spite of the complexities. The fair-unfair premise also sustains the problematic illusion of isolated spheres of life where one’s career can supposedly thrive even though the conditions of one’s personal life may be challenging or vice versa.

Evaluating Teaching

University teaching evaluations and tenure and promotion assessments provide us with another vantage point from which to observe persisting cultures of whiteness and heterosexism at work in academe. Student teaching evaluations, for instance, continue to carry significant weight in the assessment of faculty for tenure and promotion, especially at teaching-focused institutions. Yet, aside from overtly racist and sexist remarks, little consideration, if any, is given to the times when teaching evaluations function as a form of normalizing discrimination, times at which “racialized faculty members hold less power than their White students” (Monture 78). These moments include when factors such as “accent” are the basis of poor scores; when the gender presentation of the instructor and/or subject matter challenge students’ normative assumptions about postsecondary education; or when faculty, due to class, culture, body, or principle fail to present as “functionally ‘White’” (Monture 77). Additionally,

statements acknowledging the potential for bias in teaching evaluations or recommending due consideration to the differing backgrounds of different instructors can comfortably coexist with the continued overvaluation of scores or numerical data as a measure of teaching ability. The tenure process, Henry and Tator argue convincingly, “is ... one of the most powerful examples of institutionalized racism, whereby individuals are punished or rewarded based on their adherence to obsolete rules and standards designed to ensure conformity to Whiteness and maleness” (“Theoretical Perspectives” 30). The *other-mothering* of students of colour, for instance, is invisible work that Associate Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies, Maki Motapanyane, like many black women faculty, has found herself performing in every full-time position that she has held, beginning in the very first term of her career. This work has included the officially unrecognized and unrewarded labour of mentoring students in other departments, serving as a go-to figure of support for students experiencing racism in the university, and conducting reading courses with students whose intellectual interests are not served by the curricular offerings in their home departments. None of this labour has counted positively as part of the assessment process for tenure at either of the two institutions at which Motapanyane has held tenure-track positions (a Canadian undergraduate teaching university and a research university in the U.S.). In fact, she has been warned more than once by senior faculty and administrators (incidentally, all white) not to take on this work, as it receives no credit. This strange gesture of protection in no way challenges the established and problematic norms of assessment, but instead encourages faculty of colour to assimilate to these norms and turn away from what is obviously a gap in service to students of colour. The problem is compounded by university cultures that all too willingly allow for surface discussions of diversity and inclusion but frown upon any serious internal assessments of racism (Dua). It is important to note that the type of other-mothering work in question is, at its core, diversity work. In other words, this unrewarded labour, for which faculty of colour may pay with negative tenure assessments, is actually serving the diversity mandates that many universities have in place but do not substantively implement. It is often individual faculty of colour and not the offices of equity or diversity, as a whole, who effectively act to retain students of colour, see them progress through their degrees, help them apply for graduate school, or assist them in preparing for future employment; faculty of colour may, in turn, be punished for undertaking this work by universities that tout diversity and inclusion.

There is, additionally, a gendered dimension to this invisible and unrewarded work. This type of self-sacrificing service is feminized labour in academic contexts, not because it is only women who other-mother in this way, but because, regardless of who performs the labour, it is the strategically self-serving and

not the self-sacrificing who will be rewarded in the context of sexist university cultures. Other-mothering in this sense (putting the interests of under-served students first) is part of the larger problem of the gendered division of labour in academic settings. Speaking specifically to the subject of women and women's work in academe, Shelley M. Park puts the more widely applicable problem of advising faculty against unrewarded service as follows:

the assumption underlying this advice—usually given by well-intentioned liberals, including liberal feminists—is that individual women can improve their situation if they choose to. This assumption portrays the successes and failures of women as the consequence of freely made personal choices, thus ignoring the fact that the university's current organizational culture depends upon a gendered division of labour. (302)

The meaningful inclusion and adequate mentoring of faculty of colour will, therefore, require a broad willingness to destabilize and shift the underlying Eurocentrism, androcentrism, heteronormativity, and neoliberal economic values that constitute the foundation of many university cultures and that negatively affect a spectrum of nonconforming individuals.

The Contextual is (also) the Political

The context within which we conduct this analysis is, of course, key. While we can advocate for specific policy changes within post-secondary institutions, the structures of everyday life under neoliberal political systems shape what these institutions look like, as well as the actions that they take. The recent analyses of Judith Butler (2004; 2010), for instance, that pick up on Foucauldian notions of biopower and biopolitics demonstrate that some bodies are allocated different amounts of human-ness under the war on terror and are considered more fully human than others (in particular those that are racialized, differently bodied, queer, etc.). As a consequence, Western society right now is at risk of (re)prioritizing normative bodies and, quite possibly, of reasserting their hegemonic socio-cultural status. Those normative bodies are the ones that prove to be the most economically productive, as a result of a positive feedback loop—because their bodies are those that are rewarded for being so—and are hence the most valorized. Neoliberalism may function as a means, over the longer term, of re-marginalizing marginalized bodies that had seemed to be coming into recognizability and even celebration.

We see this broad socio-cultural nexus operating in the university sector as well: our previous discussion, for instance, of how promotions accrue to

those whose research outputs are high in number shows again that the sector implicitly privileges normative bodies over others, those whose lives are uninterrupted, to the greatest degree possible, by quotidian cares and concerns, let alone the need to provide care for others. This problematic reality is carried in the discursive practices of our universities; it manifests itself even through the language of diversity and greater inclusion. If this is the case—and we believe that it is—then the sector is far from one that encourages mutually supportive and caring collaboration. It is, rather, one that implicitly promotes collaboration for the sake of individual gain, with the ongoing and attendant risks of reasserting the “old boys” networks that feminist struggles, in particular, have lobbied against. While none of this analysis is intended to excuse the acts that individuals may take to exclude or limit access to bodies marked by difference, it does suggest that the existing milieu in which colleges and universities are situated is one that already discriminates, and does so today through an economic rationalization that can initially appear to be value-neutral. To the extent that diversity statements remain symptomatic of, rather than challenging to the dominant power relations fundamental to many academic institutions in Canada and the U.S., these statements will reinforce deeply rooted power imbalances while appearing to work against them.

It is not our intention to sound bleak in this framework; rather, we stress that socio-cultural stigmas and oppressions continue to intersect and overlap, both inside the university and in broader society, suggesting the need for coalition building. We can bring this issue right back to the level of mothering in the academy with which we began. Mothering in the academy is fraught with divisions; we have attended meetings where faculty members openly declare that they do not wish to support childcare initiatives on campus because having a child is a choice, and that people who make that choice should not be helped in the workplace. Setting aside the vexed question of choice, we see that such moments reveal the fragile politics of coalition building: each moment of choosing to support a colleague marked by difference is a conscious one, since the existing structure already supports normative bodies—whose normativity is, if we accept the premises of some of the thinking coming from disability studies, only ever temporary. The move to support one another across differences not only is a matter of social justice—and, at times, human rights—but is also necessary for colleges and universities in Canada and the U.S. to become places where faculty can both survive and thrive.

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Motherhood in U.S. Academe

How the Presence of Women Disrupts the Ideal Worker Model in Colleges and Universities

In this article, I consider the myth of the ideal worker and the consequences of that myth for mothers. Behind the constant juggling necessary to be successful professionally as an academic mother is the unstated assumption that a woman's caregiving role should be her primary, essential commitment, and women graduate students and early-career academics have to think strategically about how family fits into the institution of academe. Rendering invisible the whole-person needs of workers, but especially women and mothers, academe assumes an ideal worker unencumbered by family or other life constraints. My interviews with tenured women academic sociologists provide an institutional standpoint for understanding workplace needs of parents. Towards positive change, university policies must be coupled with department and colleague support because workplace climates are experienced by individuals at an intersection of institutional policies and interpersonal interactions. Colleagues must not be expected to "take up the slack" for mothers asking for time off for family leave; nor should departmental intransigence be allowed to interrupt an administration's efforts to institute flexible policies. There is positive potential in mothers' increased visibility in academe, but it will only be realized through active public support from colleagues and administrators, alike.

The literature on gender and work in academe is replete with stories of the constant juggling necessary to be successful professionally as a woman academic (Philipsen; Ward and Wolf-Wendel). Behind this gendered discussion are understandings that women's caregiving role is presumed to be her primary, essential commitment. It becomes beholden on women graduate students—early PhDs, and early-career academics—to think strategically and carefully about how family life will fit into the culture of academe. Academe (as do

other workplaces) assumes an *ideal worker* unencumbered by family or other life constraints. The reality that caregiving responsibilities fall primarily on women conflicts directly with workplace assumptions that family is a private personal matter that should be negotiated in the home (Acker; Williams; Palley and Shdaimah). A consistent theme of the scholarship in this volume is that women need collegiality and mentoring to help navigate the tough terrain of motherhood in academe, and it can be useful to recognize that some situations are more family friendly than others (Schiffrin and Liss). Strategies for better navigating the institution represent individual-level solutions that may only work for some faculty, but career mentoring that recognizes family can mean professional survival for women. Explicit and unapologetic efforts at reform can target the gender schemas that stereotype mothers as uncommitted workers; in addition, changing the climate and rules of the game to accommodate the *whole person*—she who has a home life, personal responsibilities, and interests outside of her work commitments—will help shape a more inclusive, supportive workplace for the next generation. Furthermore, greater transparency and discussion of whole-person needs help broaden responsibility for household responsibilities and care work beyond the efforts of women. Mothers shoulder most of the child care; but fathers can, too, and they are increasingly called on to do so.

In this paper, I consider the myth of the ideal worker and the consequences of that myth for mothers. My interview research on tenured women academic sociologists provides an institutional standpoint for understanding the workplace needs of parents. At all stages in the academic pipeline—from graduate school through the job market and through first and subsequent jobs—the ideal worker model prevails. I discuss the status of women in U.S. academe and introduce the discipline of sociology as an example of an academic job market that is relatively, though unevenly, inclusive of (white) women. First, I introduce my interview research methods and sample description. Next, I identify and explore themes that are central to the question of family-friendly workplace policies and are salient across my interviews. I discuss institutional policies such as day care facilities and support for family leave and question the efficacy in activating supportive policies—or negotiating terms when policies are not in place. As I have argued elsewhere (Marsh), institutional policies must be coupled with department-level and collegial support, and workplace climates are experienced by individuals at an intersection of institutional policies and interpersonal interactions. The university must not expect department chairs and colleagues to “take up the slack” for mothers asking for a maternity leave; nor should universities allow department intransigence to interrupt an administration’s efforts to adopt flexible policies since the legitimacy of family and motherhood demands creative policy adaptation. Just as

universities anticipate faculty taking sabbatical and otherwise “earning” time off with research and community commitments, planning can accommodate needed time off for personal and family obligations. Who takes up the slack? Whereas department faculty members often cover for mothers in practice, adjuncts and contingent faculty are usually asked to fill in when these needs are anticipated in the short term. However, good strategic planning at the departmental, college, and university levels can anticipate time off for family responsibilities as well as for research. This approach stretches our narrow conception of work and aligns easily with a whole-life approach to productive careers and healthy institutions.

There is positive potential in mothers’ increased visibility in academe; mothers and fathers who share care work at home unveil the ideal worker model as a static throwback, a relic of a romanticized, never-existent time gone by. However, as an ideal (even an unrealistic one) the unencumbered, fully committed worker symbolizes the competitive potential between academics that universities imagine that they thrive on. It is up to academics themselves to insist that family-friendly policies are implemented and actively supported by college administrators and chairs.

Gender in Academe and in Sociology

Social science literature establishes the persistence of gender inequalities in society as a whole (Reskin; Padavic and Reskin; AAUW “The Simple Truth”) as well as among faculty in academe. At nearly all institution types (research universities, teaching colleges and universities, community colleges, private and public institutions), women are paid less on average, have a lower and slower rate of promotion, are concentrated in fields paying less on average, and are more likely to hold contingency (non-tenure track and adjunct) positions than are men (West and Curtis; Fox). The most recent data show some positive trends toward narrowing the gender gap in hiring and promotion, although full gender parity has only been achieved at the community college level (Thornton).

Various societal, institutional, and individual factors contribute to the persistence of gender discrimination, and a variety of scholarly interpretations on the extent of gender discrimination exists (Ferree and McQuillan; Park; Wright). For example, feminist priorities—such as establishing women’s centers and women’s studies departments, mentoring junior faculty, and conducting status of women reports—are underrewarded and undersupported (Bird, Litt, and Wang). Complicating matters, academe has increasingly relied on contingent faculty, which undermines job security, career advancement, and academic freedom (Thornton; Bataille and Brown; West and Curtis). Various

dimensions of restructuring have the potential to exacerbate already-existing inequalities that are patterned by gender.

At the inter-institutional level, the family and academe are “greedy institutions,” as both spheres of life require near-total commitment of participants (Coser; Grant, Kennelly, and Ward). Women and men professionals struggle with issues of juggling family and work priorities (Spalter-Roth and VanVooren), but they continue to face these issues from a different culturally-shaped vantage point in which women remain primarily *responsible* for housekeeping and childcare.¹ Individual choices about when to start a family affect women’s careers directly, and more women are either consciously choosing to wait to have children—until a permanent position is underway or tenure is secured—or are struggling to juggle family responsibilities with pressures to meet publishing expectations and teaching commitments (Philipsen; Kennelly and Spalter-Roth).

At the individual level, cultural and institutionally-shaped processes do affect women as they struggle to make the grade. However, also at the individual-interactive level, both women and men (students, faculty, and administrators) inadvertently apply gender schemas in evaluating the performance of male and female faculty. Men are expected to perform competently and to be good leaders while women are expected to display expressive traits, to nurture, and to act in the interest of community (Spence and Sawin; Martin and Halverson; Porter and Geis). Following these assumptions, women will eventually become mothers and will be distracted from work by their primary caregiving responsibilities at home. In short, gender schemas “skew our perceptions and evaluations of men and women, causing us to overrate men and underrate women” (Valian 208). The process of differential evaluation between men and women contributes to hiring and placement differences as well as pay, tenure, and promotion inequities, which accumulate over time and throughout the course of a career (Valian).

This continued inequality, however, exists alongside expanding professional opportunities for previously excluded groups, particularly white women and (less so) women and men of colour. Inequalities persist, but a meaningful number of women have had highly successful careers at prestigious colleges and universities and in fields that, until recently, were reserved for men. Today, women make up nearly half of all newly earned PhDs, compared with just over 10 percent in 1960; in 2006, women made up 34 percent of full-time faculty and 45 percent of tenure-track faculty at PhD granting institutions and 31 percent of tenured faculty at all institutions (West and Curtis; U.S. Department of Education “Digest of Education Statistics”).

In the U.S., women’s growing representation in sociology departments mirrors academe as a whole. Women are more likely to hold faculty positions at teaching

colleges, two-year institutions (community colleges), and on contingency and part-time basis. Men are still overrepresented at research universities, in the top ranks, and in administration. For example, in 2006-07 women still made up only 32 percent of sociologists at the rank of full professor (American Sociological Association). However, women are making strides as sociology appears much more women friendly than the traditional male disciplines of engineering, law, computer science, and natural science (Fox; Epstein; Hagan and Kay; Frehill). Currently, sociology holds more of a middle-ground position where neither gender neutrality nor male-dominance can be assumed. Therefore, a closer look at women's experiences within sociology can contribute to a deeper understanding of the stakes at such a threshold level of gender inclusiveness (Bottero). Are white women and women of colour allowed to participate and thrive in academe only if they subscribe to the long-standing normative expectations of the status quo in positivist social science (Moore), and only if they mimic the (white and male) unencumbered, wholly-available employee in the ideal worker model?

Women Sociologist Report on Their Workplace Experiences

This article uses interviews from a project in which I explore the professional trajectories of women in academe, including perceptions of accomplishment and success as well as attributions of that success. I draw on unstructured, in-depth interviews with twenty sociologists in midlevel and advanced positions. Qualitative methodology allows for an exploration of emergent themes and subjective experiences, calling attention to a more detailed and nuanced understanding of experience (Patton; Silverman). In my sampling, I identified associate and full women professors listed on sociology department websites. I took advantage of snowballing opportunities when they were offered, and I contacted faculty at regional and national conferences. The sample includes fifteen white women from the U.S., three African American women from the U.S., and one Indian woman from India. Four were full professors and seventeen were associate professors at the time of the interview. Most interviews were in person and the average length of interview was ninety minutes.

Although my initial focus was on gendered attributions of accomplishment, open-ended questions and semi-structured interview schedule allowed respondents to expand on questions about a supportive institutional climate in ways that were salient to their experiences. I did ask about things like the presence of childcare and family leave policies, but I did not anticipate much elaboration on these issues. What I heard was a consistent theme of family-to-work spillover and the lack of institutional support for family obligations.

Challenging the Ideal Worker as Unencumbered by Caregiving

One of my respondents, Amie, (a pseudonym, as are all others) alerted me to the weight of the ideal worker model on new mothers. She discussed her first conference trip after maternity leave. She was still nursing and took her baby with her to the conference, and she told me that it would have helped her so much to have had childcare for three hours while she gave her presentation, but she ended up paying for it herself. In reference to the practice of supporting travel expenses such as hotel and meals, she said:

... the university understands that I need to eat, and they understand that I need to sleep. So they understand that I am a living human being. And yet they don't care that my baby is a living human being who might need my actual physical body.... He is nourished by my body that you're feeding and housing. And so we might need to take that into account.... They understand you need pens and paper to do your job. They don't care that you need childcare to do your job.

Amie's critique recognizes that mothers are allowed to continue to do their labour-market jobs, but the family costs resulting from work obligations are the responsibility of the family. Academic mothers must leave their babies at home or pay for the cost of being a mother *and* a worker themselves.

Amie's observation speaks to the lack of childcare facilities throughout academe. None of my respondents reported having childcare at work. I only asked about university-provided childcare when it was relevant to the individual interview, which, in fact, was the majority of my respondents. Nobody reported having on-site daycare or support for off-site daycare. This is a point of contention on many campuses, but universities have generally avoided committing resources, even though graduate students would benefit as well. Pat, a later-career associate professor, discussed the pivotal questions of whether students (the customer) need it and whether it remains a salient issue for faculty and staff over their life course:

We have tried ever since way before I came; they tried to get childcare on campus and they have never done it. My suspicion is that they sort of know that the people who want it, their demand will drop as soon as their kids are out of it. So they stonewall it ... but there still isn't one and that's not just for faculty but we don't have students who have children ... and then there's staff, of course.

And Danielle, who had told me earlier in the interview that her husband's

demanding job had meant that she was the one who had to be flexible with her schedule, told me of the stress of trying to piece together time off:

...the first time I was pregnant we didn't have any maternity leave if you had your baby in the summer. So, we're allowed to bank courses if we do field studies or internships and so that worked out. I just had banked a bunch of courses so I was able to take a fall off and then this time (second time), we had a two-course maternity leave at that point, but it didn't say whether it was a three or four hour course. Well, I teach several four-hour courses so he [my chair] wouldn't give me those. So, it turned out that I had to teach a course up until I couldn't teach it anymore. So, it was bad and then a colleague had to take over. It was bad for students, bad for me ... it was stressful... I just finally figured that they didn't care, but I cared.

She updated me on change in policy: “Now they do have maternity leave for three or four credit courses. You get two courses off, but beyond that you have to negotiate to try to get a semester off. I don't know why they don't just give a semester off.”

Again, the experience of academic mothers is often really shaped by an individual administrator or chair, or by supportive colleagues. Danielle went on to tell me that now they have a different provost and he seems more supportive. In addition, they now have a mediating advocate for the faculty members, and she has helped Danielle negotiate to have her January course count. The faculty advocate explained to the provost that if he didn't want to count the January course, it would create a hostile environment. Things are continuously contested and negotiated case by case, but having a third-party advocate can help bring legitimacy to a faculty mother's position.

The implementation of explicit maternity and family leave policies, in contrast with the continued resistance to providing day-care, has increased, as Ward and Wolf-Wendel point out. Since my respondents all have been in academe long enough to have achieved tenure, and many are later-career sociologists, their own experiences of navigating motherhood (or other caregiving responsibilities) have met a culture of gradually changing policies. The terrain remains uneven, but some universities offer a combination of short-term paid maternity leave or unpaid extended family leave (Sullivan, Hollenshead, and Smith). The overriding sense throughout my interviews was that things are changing for the better.

Their own experiences, however, were often of having to piece together a leave strategy. Institutional policies, even when formally accommodating, always met with the uncertainty of actual departmental accommodation. How supportive is the chair? How helpful are the colleagues? Does the dean

intervene when the chair isn't willing to accommodate? My participants felt that support for mothers depended on the department being willing to help a faculty member make things work.

I was surprised by Pat's insistence that her department was supportive. Before she achieved tenure, she had one child. She gave birth to a second child after achieving tenure:

[The department was] wonderful, but there was no family leave, so they had to teach for me and I had my first baby in September and people thought that I had done that on purpose to challenge the policy, because they always have their babies summer. I'm like, that was not planned.... But they taught for me. I had a C-section and whereas I was planning only to be out for a week, I was out for three weeks and they were teaching all my classes and at that time we had four classes so they were like "take as long as you need but hurry back!"

Pat also raised the question of how leave is used by men versus women. She said that she fears that men take their leave and don't do the childcare:

They take the leave and do their research. I don't know about her husband, but I think that would be an interesting question. Women are obviously recovering from childbirth and they are doing childcare so that it's not really, you know, we stop the tenure clock for that semester. But are men stopping the tenure clock and therefore getting extra time?

My concern is that both women and men are pressured to keep working while on leave from academe. The research indicates that men are afraid to take a leave because of a cultural bias against it. But women, too, are afraid to stop working, whether the tenure clock has paused or not. Whether because of *flexibility stigma* in academe or more generally in the U.S. workplace, workers in competitive labour markets worry that taking advantage of family-friendly policies signals a lack of professional commitment (Munsch, Ridgeway, and Williams; Cech and Blair-Loy). A department culture that supports its employees matters to women, and when the culture feels hostile to negotiating schedules and time off around family needs, mothers are reluctant to take advantage of the policies that are in place (Solomon).

Graduate Students as Workers

The ideal worker model affects graduate students to an exaggerated extent. The power imbalance between faculty and graduate students and the constant

scrutiny by mentors and professors (not to mention competition among peers) means that the ideal graduate student not only is seen as unencumbered by caregiving obligations—and is therefore likely male—but also is seen as young, currently single, and available for work around the clock. To become a “rising star” in academe, graduate students must be seen as dedicating all of their time to graduate work.

Because women face many time-consuming activities associated with motherhood, they are less likely to follow a singular school-to-career pathway. Damaske argues that women are asked the wrong question when asked if they are currently working. This snapshot view of a woman’s relationship with paid labor misses the variety of pathways that women may take. Faced with motherhood, women may remain steadily employed, but they may also pull back temporarily or their work may be involuntarily interrupted as workplaces are often not accommodating of family needs.

My respondents reported a variety of pathways into and through academe. Some started graduate school at a traditionally young age after finishing their undergraduate degrees. But several women came to graduate school with children, some at an older age while others were young with children. Not only can this be problematic in terms of living up to the ideal worker model, but it can be difficult socially, among peers. For example, Aminah was still young, but was recently divorced with young children, when she started her PhD program. She told me that most of her peers were male, several were married, and that their wives babysat for extra money. She wasn’t sure who to hang out with at social gatherings (such as children’s birthday parties) because she did not feel she had much in common with either group. She ended up chatting with the mothers about their children, even though she would rather have been talking about research and intellectual topics. Aside from motherhood posing a social dilemma for her, Aminah reported that men faculty members went bowling on a regular basis with male graduate students, which marginalized women students in the department.

Aminah and others in my sample effectively traversed this problematic, gendered terrain. But the research on the leaky pipeline in academe shows that when faced with having to keep family responsibilities invisible, or at least to effectively juggle them to maintain the mirage of an ideal worker, women often either consciously decide it’s not worth it—they prioritize their partners’ careers over their own—or they simply don’t make it through the job market and tenure process. Although my respondents (all tenured associate or full professors) kept their careers on track (stayed in the career pipeline), women in general are more likely than men to drop out of academe along the way: they leak out of the pipeline. According to Mason and Gouldon, new PhD mothers are 29 percent less likely to land a tenure track job than are women

without children, and married women are 20 percent less likely than unmarried women to land a tenure track job. Further down the line, tenure-track women are 23 percent less likely than men to earn tenure and to be promoted to associate professor. And, finally, women are 25 percent less likely than men to become full professors within sixteen years of employment. In sum, women fall through the cracks in the academic pipeline at higher rates than men do. In addition, women report lower levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of stress than do their male counterparts (Jaschick).

The Importance of Mentoring

Every woman I interviewed emphasized the importance of mentoring. Some reported that they had had extensive, helpful mentoring in graduate school (mostly from women faculty members, but sometimes from men), and some shared that they had received excellent mentoring as junior faculty. Others, however, reported a distinct lack of mentoring, either in graduate school or in their early career. Janice, for example, emphasized that her negotiating skills on the job market had suffered because of a *lack* of mentoring. Nobody told her that she should negotiate her starting salary. When Magda landed a competitive, highly ranked position at a university, her graduate school faculty seemed surprised she had had the nerve to apply for the job in the first place. Gail, on the other hand, spoke with overwhelming gratitude at the support and encouragement she had received in graduate school, and she insisted to me that this was critically important. As an associate professor at a private liberal arts college with a heavy teaching and service load, she expressed thriving within an institutional context that encourages student-faculty engagement on a one-to-one basis.

But themes of mentoring were exclusive to the domain of work: how to get published, how to navigate the job market, how to collaborate effectively, and how to navigate departmental politics regarding heavy service obligations for women. Topics related to mentoring mothers and fathers, on the other hand, were conspicuously absent from the interviews: how to talk about family friendly policies on the job market; where to look for policies on university websites; how to interview the job as much as interview *for* the job. The academic job market is one with a history of “don’t ask and tell only if you dare” interactional processes. By law, hiring universities are not allowed to ask interviewees about their marital, partner, or family status. In order to avoid perceptions of gender bias, universities err on the side of thinking they can appear to be gender blind, or at least family blind. This formal neutrality creates a situation in which an interviewing faculty member cannot tell a short-listed candidate what kinds of policies and accommodations would be helpful to a new faculty member who

might be a new mother or father. Therefore, the burden for disclosure falls to the candidate, who is in a precarious enough position.

Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?

What do my interview respondents add to what we already know about juggling career and family? Gender inequalities in academe largely persist because of gender schemas that result in statistical discrimination. Women are assumed to be caring, nurturing, and emotional simply because they are women. They are not assumed to be intellectually brilliant or even to be authorities in their field and they are assumed to be less committed to work than men because of their expected primary role in the family. Cultural norms around the family make women primarily responsible for their children and the household, which affects their ability to be unencumbered at work.

I have looked at the stories of twenty women sociologists from my own standpoint as a peer who shares with them an understanding of gender, career, and family in a disciplinary and institutional context. Many academics can relate to the personal angst of trying to balance career and family, and many know the scholarship on gender and career in sociology, in academia, and in the professions. But two striking themes emerge from my interviews. First, in the moments my participants struggle with personal choices about the timing of their PhD and of their children, about their compromises between seeking high status jobs or following their partners, and about their efforts to balance their lives, they turn to one another. They turn to their mentors and other women colleagues, who themselves struggle to survive and are overworked. Second, the women from my interviews rarely get mad or angry in public and in visible ways. As Amie eloquently put it, universities need “to get it, and to step up.” Because centuries of socializing have compelled women to be lady-like, they walk a fine line when they get “uppity” and take issue with the status quo (Ulrich) or even simply ask to be taken seriously (Enloe). Women, therefore, find it difficult to assert themselves because they are trying to survive in the institution of higher education, according to rules of the game that deny gender and family.

Although women generally do not make waves, they do understand their own need for institutional support. In her essay, Stephanie McNulty identifies three overlooked policy solutions, each one emerging from recent research on higher education: increased on-site daycare, as few services exist on U.S. college campuses; more highly publicized liberal family leave policies with pay, which need to be recognized as a legitimate request; and the dismantling of the glass ceiling in higher education that will enable more women to access the top spots, which seem to be reserved for white men.

Culturally, as scholars of workplace policies point out, it is bosses and administrators, at the top levels, who can fully legitimize taking advantage of flex-time and flex-place policies: they have to advertise them, they have to actively encourage them, and they have to use them (Munsch et al). It is organizational leaders who can destabilize the fear of flexibility stigma. When men and women bosses invoke family and embrace family as part of their identities as whole people, women can insist on their right to be whole people, and workplace cultures will shift. But in the meantime, colleagues can support colleagues by insisting that meetings end in time to meet daycare deadlines, that grading does not always spill into weekend work, and that family leave (whether for mothers, fathers, or for children of aging parents) is not a luxury but a legitimate request.

All women who experience these challenges in academe can work towards change. We can allow our families to be a visible part of who we are. We can ask our men and women colleagues and bosses about their families. We can resist the false divide between our public work selves and our private family selves. And, in the end, we can work toward a broader cultural shift that understands children and family as social and public values, not as personal and private problems. The ideal worker model never really fits any worker. Men often have families, and they benefit from allowing themselves to be whole people with lives outside of work; women benefit, as well, when their partners are freed up to share in caregiving and when they can embrace the whole identity of an academic mother.

¹Men are sharing an increasing proportion of household and family tasks, even those that occur on a regular, day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, women in two-parent families still report dedicating more time to these responsibilities than do men; men report having more leisure time on a weekly basis than do women; and women continue to carry the management role, feeling the obligation to make sure that whatever needs to be accomplished is accomplished. Whether through the occasional delegation of tasks or through accomplishing responsibilities themselves, women carry the mental burden of the responsibility. A job done poorly reflects more directly on the wife/mother than on the husband/father (Hochschild).

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Envisioning a Different Journey

Negotiating Academe with a Chronically Ill Child

To combine the roles of mother, scholar, and professor means walking a precarious tight rope between our own hopes and expectations and larger constraints and options. These roles carry heavy social weight—with iconic images and high expectations of what is deemed suitable and satisfactory. The personal narrative that follows chronicles the author’s ten year journey of navigating these roles amid the daily reality of caring for a child with a degenerative life-threatening illness. The essay discusses examples of best practices that higher education faculty and administrators may execute to create a culture of care in academe.

Introduction

By the time my partner and I decided to pursue parenthood in our early forties, we were excited and felt psychologically prepared and emotionally mature enough to handle the challenge. In many ways, the ambivalence that I felt about being a parent mirrored the misgivings I had about pursuing my doctorate and transforming myself into an academic. Both roles of mother and scholar carry heavy social weight—with iconic images and high expectations of what is deemed suitable and satisfactory.

After three months of recommended “bed rest,” I gave birth to my twin daughters four months before defending my dissertation. I graduated with my doctorate when they were five months old, and I began teaching adjunct when they were eight months old. Six months into becoming parents, my partner and I had a well-orchestrated schedule where we both worked “part-time” (i.e., thirty to thirty-five hours a week) so that at least one of us could be with our girls most of the time. On a giant chalkboard, we had elaborate schedules of

the twins' eating, sleeping, and excreting activities; we were both exhausted and invigorated by this new co-parenting experience.

A year after my daughters were born, it became apparent that one of them was not hitting the typical milestones of development. Within months, all of my daughter's abilities to sit, feed or entertain herself had vanished. She became increasingly agitated and hypotonic, and endured mild seizures. It took almost another year for the doctors to figure out what was going on—after a battery of blood tests, a muscle biopsy, two MRIs, and a weekend in the intensive care unit. Our daughter's medical disorder impairs the growth or development of the myelin sheath, the fatty covering that acts as an insulator around nerve fibers and causes severe degeneration of mental and motor skills. When we got the news that our daughter has a disease that is one of a group of genetic disorders called leukodystrophies, we were shocked—not at the confirmation of her developmental delays but of the declaration that her life would be very short.

These were also my first two years out of graduate school. They were peppered with on-campus interviews while I hauled my breast pump around and prepared for classes at two different academic institutions. While knowingly participating in the “feminization of the contingent academic workforce” as Michele Gee and Sue Margaret Norton (165) call it, I was able to teach, to attend a couple of academic conferences, and even present papers during those first years of my children's lives. Undoubtedly the climate and economic realities on college campuses are dire in many regards, and the reliance of contingent faculty has become the norm in higher education (Castañeda and Isgro; Gee and Norton; Isgro and Castañeda).

In retrospect, those two years out of graduate school could have potentially been detrimental to my career had I actually been offered a full-time tenured job. The requirements of service, teaching, and scholarship as a junior faculty would have been paralyzing, as I stumbled around the grief that one of my daughters was so painfully ill. Given the massive amounts of medical testing my daughter was undertaking—sometimes two or three visits a week—no Medical and Family Leave Act would have adequately covered my days I missed work.

For me, being a contingent academic worker worked well for what we hoped would be a temporary situation. And *temporary* is the operative word here—my lack of permanent employment was tolerable because we had hoped it would be a short-term situation. As Gee and Norton note in their assessment of women's status in the academy, although more women are earning doctorates, their chances of landing a full-time tenure track job are increasingly dwindling. My situation definitely mirrored this national trend. As I continued to seriously apply for more permanent positions across the country, my daughter's condition worsened.

There was something metaphorical about my own seemingly futile academic job search and my daughter's diminishing myelin and white brain matter. If most of us really knew we would be unemployable after eight years in graduate school or that we would give birth to a child with a rare disease, we would stay in bed with the covers over our head immobilized with fear. All that I had presumed to be normal and fair—both in academe and in parenting—was proving to be yet another example of how we construct particular narratives that allow us to get up every morning. One mother of a child with a disability notes: “No one starts a family believing that a child will cause bankruptcy and illness. No one expects heartbreak; we are psychically protected against such fears, bound in a tight biological web to hope for the best with every child” (Tisdale 62). Yet without overstating the obvious, these post-doctoral/early parenting years were a major turning point for my family. At a historical moment when health, education, and custodial care are characterized as commodities and not rights, my experience as a mothering scholar of a child with a life-threatening illness illuminates the uneven and selective existence of a culture of care in higher education.

I. Navigating Academe as an Faculty Member

Even prior to our daughter's diagnosis, I was not keen on the idea of moving absolutely anywhere in the country for a job. As sparse as I knew full-time academic jobs are, I was not willing to relocate me and my family somewhere we otherwise would not have selected.

My priorities and resolve shifted dramatically once I became the mother of a chronically ill child; on my list of priorities was now the need to be within close proximity to a high-quality medical facility that could handle pediatric neurological disorders. We also did not want to be in an entirely new community, knowing few people, if and when our daughter died. Our family needed more support than that, especially given how fragile we were feeling as we came to terms with the gravity of our daughter's medical situation. We needed to have friends around who knew us prior to us becoming parents; we needed people who could hold us close and reflect both our pain and hope that is known through years of friendship. I became highly selective of the places I applied, with far more stock rejection letters than on-campus interviews or job offers. The process helped me crystallize how I was making decisions about my family and my late-onset academic career.

With some fortitude, ardent advocates on my behalf, a strong teaching record, and an active research agenda, I landed back in a geographical area and in a department I had previously worked prior to graduate school. Maintaining relationships with previous colleagues proved to be vital. On

and off over the last several years, my partner has been the fulltime stay-at-home papa, in part because I was the one who acquired a job with health benefits and some semblance of job security. I creatively design my courses, and with the onset of more technology, I find that I can be in contact with my students via email, instant messaging, and other social networking sites without having to be on campus constantly. This flexibility has been central as my family has acquired a new “normal” that includes multiple homecare workers. Such strategy for our family meant that for four years I supported our family of four on a visiting faculty salary, which is below the national average of household income.

Given the larger social, economic, and political factors that surround health care and education in the United States, parents of children with unremitting health problems experience chronic stress, depression, and fatigue; each is both gendered and unrelenting (Ryan and Runswick-Cole; Runswick-Cole; Scott; Tilsdale; Yantzi and Rosenberg). We also make accommodations in response to our children’s disabilities and needs as our children’s needs change. In their longitudinal study, Mailick Seltzer and her colleagues suggest that parents of children with disabilities may forego job changes involving geographic relocation and experience a higher rate of marital disruption. These issues are compounded, as disability studies scholar Katherine Runswick-Cole discusses, for those families with children who have life-limiting and life-threatening impairments. Physical and social isolation, economic hardship, and lack of social services, support, and respite are common for families such as mine.

II. A Culture of Care: Theory and Praxis

What has made my life as an academic not only tolerable but viable? There have been a number of meaningful moments and interactions that have supported and validated my work and my being. The bureaucracy of my life and the systems within which I function are burdensome and often overwhelming, yet there are little pockets of people and policies that have made a real difference professionally and personally. Being thrust into a maternal subjectivity is essentially interdependent and not aligned with the neoliberal notions of an autonomous, able-bodied, rational, and ideal worker. Life is messy, and this cannot be any more evident when parenting a chronically ill child.

Interpersonal Interactions

My commitment to engage deeply and mindfully with my undergraduates continues to be the lifeblood of how and why I get to work every day. My passion is to engage in critical topics with the goal of serving as agitator, midwife, and instructor for my students. There are merits in being transparent about our

personal lives as it affects our careers as parents, especially for those children who are medically intensive. At the beginning of each semester, as I prepare my syllabi, I know that at any point over the course of the next fifteen weeks, I may immediately be pulled away should my child end up in the Intensive Care Unit again.

This also means being a little more transparent with my colleagues and students about my personal life, more so than I have been in the past. The past and present deans and chairs of my department know the medical situation of my daughter. If I am more scattered than usual because my daughter's personal care assistant got sick or an in-home nurse recently quit, I sometimes let my students know. When my daughter was initially rushed to the ICU for a weekend, I confided in my students to be patient with me given the highly unusual circumstances I was going through. I wasn't seeking sympathy, merely reminding my students that professors are people too. My evaluations remained positive that semester, even when I barely remembered preparing for a single lesson with any coherency.

Likewise, my personal experiences with administrators in higher education have made a tremendous impact on my immediate life. At two different institutions, I have had three deans who were wholeheartedly supportive of me as I had to make some really difficult professional decisions. I never felt ridiculed by them as I told them candidly the personal challenges I was having while negotiating my schedule or family medical leave. The deans never asked me to choose my career over my family; instead, they helped me navigate through the bureaucratic systems that often define academe. One administrator organized a "meal train" for my family, providing food for us as we ran back and forth to the hospital for five months trying to figure out what was happening to our daughter when she first lost her mobility.

These administrators were flexible as they still upheld a certain standard to assure that my students were getting the best classroom experience they deserved. The scary piece of this story is that my feelings of validation and support could have been blocked merely by one or two less than friendly or supportive administrators—a chilly academic climate can begin on the dyadic level in profound ways for better or worse.

Institutional Supports

Thus, having institutional supports and policies in place and being used is another way a culture of care can be created in higher education. Unless we learn and demand what is legally available to us as workers, these policies and best practices remain hollow. I've been privileged to work at a number of institutions that have strong teacher unions, informed and helpful human resource staff, and solid institutional policies. I realize that not all higher

educations have such infrastructures. Nevertheless, it is my responsibility to be well versed in my rights as a worker and a parent, and to be sure to know these going into any negotiation.

These institutional supports also include having the academic freedom to pursue research that is personally significant. As a feminist scholar, I know that public obligations of emotional labour and care (including the service and committee work required of me on my campus) tend to be undervalued and underproduced in a market economy. But I have also come to the realization, as feminist motherhood studies scholar Andrea O'Reilly asserts and confirms, that motherhood does not have to be a liability in women's lives. Being primed as a feminist social scientist, I also know that no research is truly objective. As such, I have taken my lead from a number of other academic parents of children with disabilities who have interwoven their personal lives into their academic pursuits (Adams; Bérubé; Mills; Rapp and Ginsburg; Ryan and Runswick-Cole). We have something to offer our colleagues, students, and the larger community as a result of our many years of experience as parents and caregivers of children with disabilities and medically complex needs.

On a theoretical level, what my daughter's neurodiversity has allowed me is a better understanding of how disability and difference are constructed in our lives. In her essay "Seeing the Disabled," Rosemarie Garland Thomson notes that the very broad term *disability* encompasses the various categories of disadvantaged people "by devaluing bodies that do not conform to cultural standards" (348). She, like other disability studies scholars, argues that through a complicated set of practices, the systematic comparison of able and disabled bodies is constituted. The very corporeal experience of incubating, breastfeeding, and raising two children who have disparately different cognitive and physical abilities has informed my teaching and research. In my interests of the politics of representation and identity, my daughters' genetic compositions and the ways in which we respond to their social and physical needs have very real effects. I have begun researching the ways that disabilities are discussed and portrayed in the media, and I focus specifically on public mothers, such as Sarah Palin, who have children with disabilities. I have interviewed mothers of children with Down's syndrome to ask them about their experiences with health care providers (Isgro). I have also designed a course in health communication that examines the different perspectives and systems of health and health care. For a while, I blogged for an online resource for parents of children with special needs, and I am currently on advisory boards for the state of Vermont's pediatric palliative program and the children's hospital. My lived experiences have redirected my advocacy in directions I had not expected prior to becoming a parent.

Gendered Labour

Part of this advocacy has not only been for myself in academe but also for the services needed for my daughter and the providers of these services. Because of my daughter's disability, she requires constant care in all aspects of her life. Rather than our lives as parents becoming a little easier as our children grow, we have found that parenting and caregiving has intensified as our daughters have grown. The work-family strain that many families in the US experience is compounded for parents of children with disabilities by the extra child care demands and the need to arrange and supervise a variety of services (DeRigne and Porterfield; Mailick Seltzer et. al.; Ryan and Runswick; Runswick-Cole). Since the onset of my daughter's illness, our family life feels far more chaotic and free form. As Sallie Tisdale states, "the element of surprise is part of the struggle" of parenting a child with a disability (62). In addition to serving as physical and emotional caregivers for our children, we have been brutally thrust into the unknown world of care management. Our days are cluttered with filling out forms, negotiating with social services we didn't even know existed, making various medical and therapist appointments for our daughter, adjusting her medications and equipment, and monitoring her seizure activities and reporting such events to medical staff. Quite bluntly, caring for ourselves as caregivers is difficult; we have little respite, no paid leave or access to services that may sweep in and give us a break.

The other piece of my new "normal" life with a chronically ill child is that my personal life is riddled with the very issues around emotional and caring labour that many feminist theorists and activists have taken to task. Tending for the young, sick, and elderly disproportionately falls on women, and my daughter's care providers, aside from her father, are female. My partner's caretaking role is not to be underplayed, but it has been noticeable how unusual his active home role is when there are few other male care providers coming through our doors. When the staffing is available, our daughter's care is distributed among practitioners such as therapists, case managers, teachers, social workers, and personal care assistants. Their remunerated work has a relatively high turnover and burnout rate; as a case in point, our family has had over thirty personal care assistants and nurses since our daughter's diagnosis. We have gone for months at a time with no coordinated care manager or an in-home nurse available to provide respite. Working mainly with women as formal care providers, we are excruciatingly aware of the limited wage offered to these caregiving workers by the state, their agencies, and by private families. Most of these women have been incredibly generous in their attention and emotional labour they exert towards my daughters. Given the traffic of people in and out of our house caring for my daughter, our physical home space, and the activities that occur within it, is quite public to a number of acquaintances.

Concluding Thoughts on a Culture of Care

Coming into one's identity as an academic is a process and is much like *becoming* a mother, an advocate, or a whole human being. Similarly, a culture of care is also a process; it is cultivated and made a priority to be successful. It may or may not be deliberate, but there must be intention and attention placed on it if we are to have a working environment where people of all identities and abilities and caretaking responsibilities are able to fully participate in higher education. I rue the day that I will have to face my colleagues and students when my daughter finally dies. I don't deal well with people's sympathies, and yet it is only through talking about my daughter's illness and my own struggles as an academic with a medically complicated offspring that perhaps the isolation of such an experience may be shared. This experience has also made the theoretical deeply personal in terms of thinking about best practices that organizations can implement to create a "culture of care" for employees. Practising a "culture of care" within academic environments opens opportunities to acknowledge the multiple identities and responsibilities of campus citizens while also fostering a campus culture that is compassionate and productive. Although creating a "culture of care" is often uneven and messy, it is possible in higher education.

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Poverty and Power

The Moral Regulation of Single Mother University Students

The university was designed with the traditional student in mind. Students who are sole-support parents often have difficulties negotiating their experiences and expectations as a student with those that arise as a parent. This paper uses institutional ethnographic interviews conducted in the summer and fall of 2011 with eight single mothers who are postsecondary students in order to better understand the barriers that they face while obtaining a postsecondary education. This paper explores the theme of power and moral regulation from the interviews. I begin by describing the concept of moral regulation and use this concept as a theoretical base to explore the experiences of shame, violence, scrutiny, stigma and resistance that arose throughout the interviews and in the literature.

Kimberly Rogers, a woman from Sudbury, Ontario, was convicted of welfare fraud for collecting from both Ontario Works and the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) at the same time (Chunn and Gavigan 329). When she began college in 1996, many students received assistance from both social assistance and student loans at the same time. She continued to collect both forms of assistance after these policies were changed in 1997, making it illegal to access both programs simultaneously. She pleaded guilty to fraud and was put under house arrest and deemed ineligible for further assistance, leaving her without any form of income and no way to earn money. When her benefits were reinstated, she was left with only eighteen dollars a month after rent (Chunn and Gavigan 329). The conviction resulted in a criminal record, making it difficult for her to find work in the social services field. Kimberly Rogers died during a heat wave on August 11, 2011; she was eight months pregnant at the time (Yourk).

According to the coroner's inquest, the official cause was a prescription drug overdose (Chunn and Gavigan 329). Locating the problem with Kimberly Rogers as an individual, the inquest's findings removed her death from its relational context. The fraud conviction and house arrest were important factors in her death, as was the perception of her being a criminal perpetuated by the media.

In Ontario, until 1997, single parents could attend college or university while obtaining student loans to pay tuition and social assistance to pay for their living expenses such as rent and groceries. Fifteen years after Rogers' death, the two programs remain incompatible despite the Ontario Works and the Ontario Student Assistance Program's inability to provide for the needs of many students, especially those with dependent children.

In this paper, I describe the concept of *moral regulation* and use it as a theoretical base to show how it impacts the everyday lives of single-mother university students. I discuss some of the consequences of moral regulation described by single mother students including their experiences of violence, criminalization, and isolation. I then discuss the construction of the *welfare mother* and the stigmatization of single mothers living in poverty. From here, I move to the idea of empowerment and critique neoliberal notions of escaping poverty if one works hard enough. I show empowerment as a complex form of power where single-mother students negotiate and resist moral regulatory notions of what it means to be a "good" mother from within and beyond academe. I will also discuss strategies that policy makers and university administrators can use to make obtaining a degree more accessible to single mothers.

I used institutional ethnographic methods in this research, as developed by Dorothy Smith (2005). I interviewed eight single-mother university students in the summer and fall of 2011. Interviews lasted up to four hours each. The participating women enrolled in university while they were the sole-support parent or primary caregiver to at least one child. Participants ranged in age from early twenties to late forties and all considered themselves to be low income, although that was not a condition to participate in the study. Five participants had one child, two had two children, and one had three children. The children's ages ranged from two to nineteen years old at the time of the interviews. All but one of the participants identified as Caucasian; the other identified as Aboriginal. Out of all the children, two were Aboriginal and three were Black. Two of the women identified as LGBTQ and two had disabilities, which they disclosed in the interviews.

I use quotes from the interviews throughout the article to support the theories and literature. This research was approved by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board.

Moral Regulation

Moral regulation combines disciplinary power, which produces families in specific ways, (Foucault) and more repressive forms of power and punishment (Brock). Glasbeek describes it as the “modern, secular equivalent of religious fervour in maintaining social order” (2). Moral regulation establishes “disciplinary regimes, including a system of rewards and punishments” (Brock xxvi) to encourage certain behaviours while discouraging others.

In establishing specific policies—from the Poor Laws of England, which legislated workhouses in the early nineteenth century (Swanson), to the Harris government’s *Ontario Works Act*—state and class relations have effectively perpetuated inequalities in order to maintain a certain moral order: middle-class nuclear families are held as standard, and those that do not fit are punished (Little). For single mothers, “the language used when describing nonmarital birth—illegitimacy, out-of-wedlock pregnancy/birth, and unmarried or unwed mother—indicate both the character of the norm-violation and the strong social disapproval attaching to it” (Hunken 22).

Hunken describes a culture of single motherhood based, not on the lived experiences of single mothers, but on the negative stereotypes that surround them. For example, single mothers are believed to be sexually promiscuous, dependent on welfare, and responsible for various social ills. They are often portrayed as “lazy, unwilling to work, and as bad parents” and accused of “purposely giving birth to more children to increase their welfare checks” (Hunken 25). These perceptions tell mothers that they are not deserving of going to college (Hunken 27), which not only legitimizes the inadequate funding of education but also reveals a two-tiered system of social programs in Ontario. Programs tied to employment in the paid workforce provide more funding and less stigmatization than Ontario Works or OSAP programs (Evans).

Capitalism has a vested interest in upholding a standard where the poor are seen as morally dubious and not deserving of help. For instance, poverty effectively maintains pool of workers willing to work dangerous jobs for low wages (Little 239). By bringing moral character into question, the focus shifts from an unjust system to flawed individuals. This ideology encourages low-income individuals to conform to the middle-class ideal, regardless of whether this ideal is attainable.

Moral Regulation through Welfare Snitch Lines

Moral regulation at works through the use of crime-prevention phone lines, or snitch lines, which encourage neighbours to report on each other. Bob Rae’s NDP government implemented telephone lines to report suspected cases of welfare

fraud in the 1990s. They were further expanded under the Harris government's austerity regime. Anyone suspecting that a person on social assistance might be committing fraud can anonymously call these lines (Little 250). The most common use for them is reporting a single mother for having a man in her home because if she is having a sexual relationship with a man, the belief is that he should be financially supporting her (Little 250-1).

Single mothers need to regulate how they present themselves all the time. If their children are not clean, their parenting skills become suspect. But if they are dressed too nicely, it is assumed that they are not disclosing all of their income to the welfare office, or that they must be living with a man who is supporting them (Little 174). Several participants shared experiences with these reporting lines:

I got a phone call one night from [children's aid]. Apparently, the daycare called and said that I was neglecting [my child] because his face isn't clean. His face wasn't clean because he eats breakfast in the stroller on the way to daycare because we are too rushed in the morning to do it at home, I mean, at least you can tell he is fed, right? So now I have to buy these expensive wipes and wash his face outside before we go in. I don't think this would happen to a doctor's kid.

Another participant had a similar experience:

My son was outside for five minutes on a school day, he was on part days and a neighbour called children's aid and told them my kid was home playing outside all day when he should be at school. Children's aid had to call the school to make sure I wasn't keeping him home.

Through forms of normalization and surveillance, as symbolized by these snitch lines, we learn to discipline ourselves, which is even truer for low-income families.

Poverty as Violence

There are real consequences for people who do not conform to this middle-class standard that go beyond the perception that they are morally dubious. The levels of poverty forced upon single mothers can be described as *violent* considering the toll that hunger takes on people's bodies and minds. Social class is inscribed on the body of poor single mothers. Adair compares this experience to getting a higher education. She describes how poverty remained *written* on her body, and how that changed through the process of obtaining a PhD. Just as Foucault shows that discipline often produces docile bodies, Adair de-

scribes examples of how “poor single mothers and their children are physically inscribed, punished, and displayed as the dangerous and pathological Other” (28). She lists many examples: the scars resulting from unaffordable health care; the crooked and sometimes rotting teeth appearing from a lack of accessible dental care; the twisted, misshapen feet developing from not having the right kind of shoes; and the ill-fitting clothing and unkempt hair—which do not conform to middle-class standards—stemming from a lack of time and money.

Several participants had similar experiences:

I need braces but I still cannot afford them. My daughter’s teeth are growing in crooked, and it pains me to know that I may not be able to afford to get her braces, either. I feel like our teeth scream out to tell the world that we are poor.

Another participant said:

I have a hernia that I can’t have fixed because of my weight. [The doctor] said they can’t operate unless I lose weight, but I can’t lose weight because it hurts too much to exercise and the specialists are too expensive... I don’t know what I’m going to do.

Poor bodies mark the poor as distinct from those who present as middle class, and those same bodies are interpreted as proof of an inner pathology and immorality, suggesting a need for further discipline (Adair 35). Five of the eight women participants mentioned violent experiences with a male partner without my even asking about domestic violence. One participant mentioned needing an education in order to leave her spouse:

I felt like I needed to [go to university], in order to break away from [ex], it was going to be contingent on me getting more education so I could get a better job to support myself.

Another participant expressed a real fear that she would have to return to an abusive partner if she had a problem with her benefits:

My ex was really abusive, emotionally, verbally, financially, physically. In counselling, they showed us this wheel with eight points of violence and he had them all covered. Before I had an education, I was afraid that if welfare cut me off, if I lost my OSAP, if I had a health issue I couldn’t afford, I would have no choice but to go back to him. Now, I have a degree. I feel like I should be able to support myself and my kids.

A vast literature on violence against women and poverty-related violence against women exists, but none connects violence and poverty to the experience of being woman students. Women living in poverty have more difficulty living apart from abusive relationships, and student poverty is so prevalent that it is often romanticized. This reality creates significant barriers for improving the safety of single-mother students and their children.

Welfare as Fraud

If social assistance is too comfortable, as commonly believed, recipients will not look for paid work (Swanson 75). According to this belief, paid work needs to be rewarded using the principle of less eligibility: benefits must be no higher than the lowest-paid jobs (Little 2). This way of thinking is based on the assumption that needing welfare *is* fraud, which acts as a means of disciplining people living in poverty. According to Chunn and Gavigan, “the restructuring of welfare has shifted and been shifted by public discourse and social images ... welfare fraud became welfare *as* fraud. Thus poverty, welfare and crime were linked. To be poor was to be culpable, or at least vulnerable to culpability” (220). The notion of welfare as fraud affects access to a postsecondary education for single mothers. As morality and poverty become increasingly intertwined within the dominant discourse, it becomes too easy to believe that poor families deserve to be poor and thus do not deserve further assistance. These programs, such as OSAP, currently in place are not designed to fit the needs of families: poverty is a systemic, and not an individual, problem.

The perception that many people illegally claim benefits has become so widespread that “merely needing welfare ... is abuse” (Swanson 79). The actual statistical rates of fraud and the meagre welfare benefits are never acknowledged. The word “abuse” is often associated with drugs, alcohol, and violence—making it a perfect term for disparaging the poor.

From 1998 to 1999, the Ontario government had 747 fraud convictions out of a 238,042 caseload, which is a fraud rate of 0.3% (Little 254). This number is likely inflated as those alleged to have committed fraud are often asked to sign a repayment agreement where a portion of their monthly cheque is withheld until the fraudulent amount is repaid. If the recipient refuses to sign, their benefits can be indefinitely withheld (Swanson 79).

I began this paper using the experience of Kimberly Rogers, a student who had collected from both Ontario Works and OSAP at the same time. As previously mentioned, she was ordered to repay the fraudulent amount of approximately thirteen thousand dollars, which she obtained over the course of several years. For her, this money was the difference between having a home and continuing her education and having to leave school because of lack of funding.

With regards to these statistics, what activities constitute fraud, and how little money some of them cost, is never discussed. One participant had an experience that elaborates this point:

I helped my ex cash a cheque so he could pay me child support. I deposited it in my bank account and withdrew the entire cheque right away and gave him the money. He gave me my fifty dollar support payment. He didn't have a bank account and didn't want to lose money at a cheque cashing place, so he said that if I didn't do this, he would not pay me my support which comes off my welfare cheque whether I actually get it or not. So I didn't have a choice. When this money showed up on my bank statement, [my caseworker] said it's fraud and they are making me pay them back this eight hundred dollars by taking sixty dollars off per month off my cheque. So now, I have to keep paying them back money that I never saw.

Another participant discussed the small bursary she received that covered the cost of tuition for one class, allowing her to take a night course while on Ontario Works. “But,” she said, “this was welfare fraud. This was Kimberly Rogers. Even going to the food bank without claiming what might be the equivalent of the food you collected is welfare fraud.” The criminalization of poverty goes beyond only affecting those receiving higher rates of assistance than they would normally qualify for; it makes anyone who receives welfare benefits suspect. These regulations make it a crime to receive a cash birthday gift from a family member or to sell children’s outgrown baby clothes, without claiming the money and then having it then taken away from the next month’s benefits.

In 1988, the Social Assistance Review Committee in Ontario argued that fraud rates for welfare were no greater than fraud rates in the tax system or the unemployment insurance system (SARC). On this subject, Chunn and Gavigan write, “because public confidence in the social assistance system depends in large part on the belief that the funds are being well spent and that abuse is being kept to a minimum, we accept that some of the measures adopted to control social assistance fraud may need to be more extensive than they are in other systems” (229). This regulation includes but is not limited to the following: snitch lines where people report suspected fraud; home visits where a welfare worker comes into the home to make sure that the recipient is living under the conditions claimed in the application; and annual assessments where recipients must show documentations such as bank statements, rent receipts, and tax return information to document a continuing need, despite the fact that they must declare their income and expenses every month.

Smith-Madsen discusses her experience with home visits while on social assistance:

I was investigated. I was spied on. A welfare investigator came into my home and, after thoughtful deliberation, granted me permission to keep my belongings... Full-fledged citizens have the right to deny an officer entry into their homes unless they possess a search warrant; mothers on welfare fork over citizenship rights for the price of a welfare check. (139)

Middle-class families would not tolerate home visitors showing up to inspect their living arrangements before deciding whether they qualified for tax deductions based on Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) contributions. Ontario Works recipients should not have to tolerate these visits either.

Isolating Mothers from Experiences of Class Consciousness

Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa find that because women often work alone—given the privatized character of domestic labour—in the home, they are largely denied the chance to share their experiences. James and Dalla Costa write that “with the advent of the capitalist mode of production, then women were relegated to a condition of isolation, enclosed within the family cell, dependent in every aspect on men” (12), and because of this “women are robbed of the possibility of developing their creative capacity” (14). Within capitalism, women’s isolating role as a housewife kept them separate from each other, which denied them the possibility of developing class-consciousness.

By using moral regulation and thinly veiled threats of criminality, welfare offices work to keep women isolated from one another, as Adair shows:

“Welfare Fraud” signs covering the walls at the welfare office remind her, when waiting to talk to a worker about her benefits not to trust anyone with the details of our life, for fear of further exposure and punishment. And so, like most poor women, I had remained isolated, ashamed, and convinced I was alone in, and responsible for, my suffering. (46)

These institutions keep impoverished people divided from one another, and along with moral regulation and shame, prevent the formation of solidarity and class-consciousness, stopping the poor from fighting back. Even when recipients realize that they are not to blame for their own situation, the stereotypes surrounding poverty are so pervasive that they might think they are the exception to the rule. When my participants received Ontario Works, they often felt the need to defend that decision whereas participants who accessed

insurance benefits they had paid into, such as Employment Insurance, never felt the need to justify that decision: “I don’t want to be on [Ontario Works]. I wish I could be working now but because of medical reasons and not enough money to go back to school to do the work I want to do I can’t do it.”

Clearly recipients of Ontario Works programs want to work for wages. Another participant, and former recipient of Ontario Works, discussed this as well:

I always felt like I had to justify my decision to be on welfare when I couldn't hide it from people. People didn't know my situation, where I came from, and walking into the welfare office, I figured they would all just think I was too lazy to work, so I would keep my head down, never make eye contact with anyone, and hope that nobody recognized me walking into or out of the office.

She was concerned that if she had been recognized, people wouldn’t have known the circumstances leading to her receiving assistance, upholding the idea that receiving social assistance is a problem in and of itself.

The Welfare Mother

Moral regulation also scrutinizes the parenting skills of single mothers. Mothers on social assistance feel ashamed at both the acquiring of the paltry benefits and the living off them. Their poverty is seen as an individual flaw, not as a result of the broader social context. This has real consequences not only on the self-esteem of single mothers living in poverty, but also on the self-esteem of children. When children in these households have difficulties, their behaviour is often dismissed by professionals as products of bad parenting. Many of the participants who had received social assistance expressed feeling shame, and several talked about how it impacted their children:

That's another thing, when he was born, the shame. I felt shame.... And [son]'s paying the price for it, in and out of jail and everything else because I kept asking the school system, over and over, they dismissed me because I'm a mom on welfare, single, dumb.... I went to parenting classes and everyone was just so ready to blame, and, you know, like there wasn't ... any help.

Her son had an undiagnosed disability and she could not access help. Another woman had a similar experience:

[Son] has been on waiting lists for years for [autism] testing. Every time I think we are getting close, there is another complication—another hoop

to jump through or another wait list to transfer to. I don't always know how to handle him.... Sometimes when he has a meltdown in public I feel like everyone is judging me because we look poor and I can't "control" my kid. Or I feel like teachers and daycare workers blame me.

Testing for learning disabilities and autism is expensive; quotes for initial testing and a diagnosis range from about fifteen hundred to three thousand dollars. Follow-up costs for specialized tutoring, specialist appointments, or medication can be much higher. These services are sometimes offered through community services for free, but they have long wait-lists and require support from teachers and social workers. If the mother is blamed for the child's behaviours, these will be difficult to get.

Blaming the mother is not a new phenomenon. In the 1940s and 50s, for example, it was common for professionals to blame mothers for children's autism, schizophrenia, and homosexuality (Garey and Arendell). These myths have been debunked, but still children's problems "are often linked to the social situations of their mothers—poor mothers, unmarried mothers, divorced mothers, employed mothers and so forth" (Garey and Arendell 1). If poverty does, in fact, cause a higher incidence of problems for children, systemic causes of poverty should be addressed as the root cause, not blaming individual mothers.

Empowerment

In *The Will to Empower: Technologies of Citizenship and the War on Poverty*, Barbara Cruikshank (31) describes how empowering the poor is typically thought of as getting them off government funding and forcing them to find paid employment. In this view of empowerment, the poor become "defined by all they lacked, the poor needed help, but it was to be given in the form of a stimulus to act for themselves" (Cruikshank 36). This meritocratic viewpoint allows for the illusion that those who work hard enough will become employed and will live above the poverty line whereas those who remain poor did not make the effort and are not deserving of assistance. This is the premise behind social programs like Ontario Works. Switching to OSAP forces people in poverty to act for themselves and to fall in line with the rhetoric of "taking a hand up and not a hand out." For instance, the Ontario Works Act mandate recognizes "individual responsibility" and promotes "self-reliance through employment" (*Ontario Works Act*). In order to even try to get a postsecondary education, recipients need to be determined that they are capable of it as the consequences of not succeeding include high debts and the loss of any medical benefits offered by provincial welfare programs. Every one of my research participants enrolled in university had debt ranging from \$17,000 to \$56,000.

The poor are blamed for their own poverty. It is assumed that adequate jobs or educational opportunities exist for those willing to make the necessary sacrifices. But no consideration is given to the impact that these sacrifices will have on the families or whether these opportunities are a viable solution or even attainable for some people. This assumption is seen in Ontario Works policies. No exceptions or accommodations are made based on circumstances like having sole responsibility for children. One participant discussed some of the problems she had trying to access these programs that made it impossible for her to obtain an education:

I had OSAP and because I had to leave school due to illness I can't get it again... I've tried [Ontario Works], they don't help ... which I think is crap because I'm trying to go to school to get a job to get things done and be off Ontario Works.

Another participant had to drop out of school because she could not access OSAP:

I wasn't eligible for OSAP. I had an outstanding amount with them... I think it was less than two thousand dollars, may as well have been a million dollars ... I went to my bank, called OSAP a number of times, I called the school, I contacted the Knights of Columbus, my church, I mean, anyone that I thought could help ... it got to the point where it was very clear that I was out of options, there was no help. You have to be in a very ideal situation to get OSAP. The policies currently available to single mothers do not necessarily help anyone who wants an education, making this notion of empowerment completely unattainable for most people.

Empowerment as Complex Forms of Power

Margaret Little (165) wrote that “power is not static, nor is it an attribute or possession; instead it is relational, an ongoing process of human interaction.” Rather than fixating on power as something that the dominant group has all of and single mothers lack altogether, she looks at some of the complexities between individual’s relationship to and experiences of power. A fixed power dynamic exists in certain aspects of the lives of single mothers as they are not in control of the degree and types of interventions that they may receive, such as legislation dictating Ontario Works, OSAP, and even child support and alimony amounts. However, “single mothers creatively manipulate, stubbornly refuse, and strategically argue with social workers in an attempt to get the help they require” (Little 165). Single mothers actively negotiate their way through

and sometimes against the system rather than just passively accepting what little help they are offered.

Moral codes are not accepted by everyone. Sometimes they are merely followed without being completely internalized; at other times, they are met with resistance. The distinction between moral regulation and social control lies in this difference. Social control relates to the dichotomy between the powerful and powerless: those making and administering social policies are all-powerful, and those using the social policies are powerless. Moral regulation insists “that this set of moral rules and regulations can and will be challenged” (Little 239). One participant told me an amusing story about how she thought about challenging power:

I got pregnant. And I had this kind of job that wouldn't have really worked out.... I decided to go through with the pregnancy, I decided that I would go on the then, pre-1995, pre-Mike Harris, “contract” from the government ... and that offer from the Ontario government was something like, I don't remember, maybe \$1100 a month that they would give you as a new parent ... and I actually considered suing the government for breach of contract because it wasn't until the cuts came that I realized I had to do something. So, 1995 rolls around, [my child] is a year old, and I thought they're going to cut my benefits down to eight hundred dollars and something dollars, with workfare, and you know, whatever else.

The quote is powerful because it looks at social assistance rates as a contract with the government, not as something that the government does for the recipients. Although the recipients do not have a lot of say in what the terms of the contract will be—relations of power are at play as the parties do not come to an agreement on equal footing—the idea of a contract is still a way of understanding this experience that does not represent recipients as powerless or as ashamed of their circumstances.

Holloway makes an important distinction between *power-over* and *power-to-do*: “our power-to-do is perverted in capitalism into a power-over, the power of capitalism to tell us what to do with our lives, but it exists not only in power-over, but also as the drive against-and-beyond power-over” (199). The power that single mothers have to do things—such as to get an education, to learn, to make use of their creative capacities—is transformed by capitalism into a power-over relationship. Capitalist social relations require that single mothers return to school to get an education in order to get a job. But this dynamic also leads to a situation where people can struggle against the power-over relationships.

Several recipients talked about ways of fighting back including participating in antipoverty rallies, giving public talks about their experiences, talking to other single-mother students about available programs, writing letters to newspapers, and subverting policies in subtle ways. I’ve had very powerful experiences of struggling together with other single mothers. When my daughter was born, I started attending a weekly support group for young single mothers. We quickly became friends, celebrated our children’s birthdays together, started a clothing swap, and a community kitchen. Most of us received Ontario Works assistance, and we often discussed our experiences with social workers. Together, we helped a mother with diabetes get additional funding in the form of a special dietary allowance, and I tutored a few people through math and English classes until six of us received our high school diplomas. This group of women also helped me to leave an abusive relationship, to receive help for a severe panic disorder, and to eventually relocate to Sudbury so I could return to school.

Educating single mothers, especially within post-secondary institutions, is “an act of subversion with the potential to liberate communities and individuals and to radically alter static and hierarchical systems of power” (Adair 47). Adair said that her education gave her a voice and an authority with which she can now use to talk about these issues (47). Similarly, for the women whom I interviewed, being on welfare was often disempowering, but obtaining a postsecondary degree weakened the power of the moral regulatory discourses surrounding single motherhood. However, only half of the women were able to complete their degrees. Four women dropped out by their second year of undergraduate studies despite having good grades. Three years later, two of the participants have received master’s degrees and two are currently enrolled in PhD programs. The barriers to obtaining a postsecondary education for single mother students need to be addressed, in part through reforming the Ontario Works and OSAP programs.

Supports

The women participants identified many supports that would enable them (and others) to get a postsecondary degree. Six mentioned the importance of support from their families. All of them mentioned financial support, especially in the form of non-loan-based programs, such as grants and scholarships. Many of them suggested that combining student loans with other support programs would allow them to finish their education with a smaller debt load. Student loans could cover the cost of tuition and books while programs like Ontario Works or Employment Insurance could cover the costs of rent, food, medical needs, and other day-to-day living expenses. Funding amounts for these programs would also need to be increased.

There are barriers within institutions that need to be addressed to help single mother students finish their degrees. Several participants mentioned mandatory attendance policies and evening-scheduled classes as barriers as well. Some even had to attend exams on Saturdays when there was no childcare available. A little bit of flexibility with respect to deadlines, attendance and even cellphone policies would go a long way towards helping single-mother students. Also, participants wanted a family-friendly atmosphere on campus, such as family housing, a support group for students with dependents, the ability to bring children to class when childcare falls through, and child-friendly outdoor spaces, such as a playground. This would help mitigate some of the incompatibilities in their roles as parents and students.

Conclusion

The moral regulation of single mothers has implications on social policies, perceptions on what it means to be poor and how single mothers view themselves. Having to live up to a middle-class standard while living in poverty has negative outcomes for single mothers and their children, and this happens whether mothers are on social assistance, OSAP, or working for low wages. Using the voices of my participants, I have shown how this stigma creates barriers to accessing a postsecondary education that go beyond the obvious financial barriers. And finally, I have shown that power is not merely concentrated within one group but struggled for among many groups and single-mother students contest and negotiate this power in nuanced and multifaceted ways.

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Initiatives to Empower Women Faculty Members at University of Ottawa

Mothers See the Value in Participation

Despite the increasing number of female students in undergraduate and graduate programs, female faculty members are still a minority at most Canadian universities. Although participation by women has increased significantly at the pre-tenure assistant rank, substantial gaps between the number of men and women at the associate and full professor levels remain as well as for research chairs and leadership roles. This article describes the multiple initiatives put in place at the University of Ottawa to support women faculty members in their careers, a great majority of whom are mothers, trying to balance professional and family responsibilities. The policies include long-standing Policy 94 named for its year of inception, a number of career and leadership development activities through the Centre for Academic Leadership established in 2005, and tailored activities through the NSERC / Pratt & Whitney Canada Chair for Women in Science and Engineering program (2011-2016). Although not all of these activities were geared towards women and mothers, the participants, overwhelmingly, have turned out to be mothers or have expressed the desire to become mothers. Among these current and aspiring women professors, many are unsure of how to combine an academic career with motherhood. A short portrait of the activity participants and their reflections are included in the paper. In particular, responses from mothers who, as professors, attended the Centre for Academic Leadership writing retreats indicate that their participation was influenced by their family responsibilities; these mothers cited the particular usefulness of the activity for writing productivity.

Canada enjoys a reasonable participation of women in academe, with 30 percent of academic researchers being women, lagging behind several European countries like the oft-touted Sweden at 44 percent (“Strengthening Canada”). Although

the participation rate has grown considerably since the 1970s, percentages in the higher ranks and roles (associate professor, full professor, department chair, dean and vice-president, Tier 1 Canadian Research Chair (CRC) and Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC)) remain low to extremely low. Canada's lack of candidates for the 2010 round of CERCs prompted outrage and a commission of the *Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension* report, which was published in 2012 (Canadian Council of Academies). In the recent second round, one woman has been selected. In the social sciences and humanities as well as the life sciences, women participate in university study programs in larger numbers than men, only to have that trend reversed at the professorial level. In the physical sciences, engineering, computer science, and mathematics, women struggle to reach 30 percent university study program participation, and the male to female ratio at the professoriate level increases. Clearly there is an underutilization of these pools (Nelson).

Mason and Goulden have spent several years monitoring the effect of having children on academic careers in the U.S. Over a decade of research into the "relationship between family formation and the academic careers of men and women" went into their recent book, *Do Babies Matter?* (Mason, Wolfinger and Goulden). Using the Survey of Doctorate Recipients, which has tracked, since 1973 and every two years since, more than 160,000 PhD recipients until age seventy-six across all disciplines with surveys, and their own survey of close to 8,700 faculty members in the entire University of California system, Mason and Goulden show that successful male faculty members generally are married with small children while the majority of women who achieve tenure are not married with children. The majority of women who achieve tenure indicate that they had fewer children than they would have liked or stayed single for their career. Given that the average age for receiving a PhD is thirty-three, and over forty for achieving tenure, it is no wonder that fewer women than men have children or that women have fewer children than they would have liked. Indeed many of the women who have "early babies," defined as within five years of the PhD, slip into the second tier academic workforce of part-time teaching, adjunct, or lecturer—the "gypsy scholars" as Mason and Goulden call them.

In Canada, the trend is similar. Statistics Canada data from 2006, as reported by the Canadian Council of Academies, show that more women professors in the thirty- to forty-year-old bracket are single with or without children than men, and fewer are married with children. Although Canadian maternity leave policies are much more generous and proactive than those in the U.S., many women fear using the full leave and find that the leave itself is seen as a deterrent for hiring women even in a CRC holder's laboratory because of a potential loss of productivity. Childcare and mobility issues were also reported as having a negative effect on women's research careers.

Background

Within this context, the University of Ottawa, recognizing that women were underrepresented in the professoriate and being committed to promoting a better balance between the number of men and women professors, adopted a new policy in 1994 by setting a global recruitment objective of at least 40 percent for the tenure track hiring of women professors for the following three years, with a particular interest in attracting women who had not yet entered an academic career or who might have considered returning to an interrupted academic career. Over twenty years later, this policy still exists, and a discretionary fund is available every year to support women professors developing their careers. Eleven professors, for example, out of seventeen applications received up to \$7,500 each in April 2015 for course relief or research assistance for the next academic year.

Besides this equity policy, the University of Ottawa also invested in the creation of the Centre for Academic Leadership (hereafter referred to as the “Centre”) in 2005, currently managed by Françoise Moreau-Johnson. Although its central mission is to support current and potential academic leaders so that they can fulfil their administrative responsibilities competently, the Centre’s four objectives around leadership and mentoring target all tenured and tenure-track (regular) faculty development. Interestingly, although the activities are designed and available to both genders, it is mostly women who make use of these resources. Since 2005, 272 workshops have been offered with a total of 2,585 participants where 67.1 percent were women (these numbers do not include the mentoring initiative); women only represent 39 percent of regular faculty. The gender difference is even more evident in two key initiatives: the mentoring program (73.6 percent of participants are women) and the writing events (87.4 percent are women). A number of initiatives target women specifically: a mentoring program and a leadership program for women have been developed that help women achieve and aspire to key roles at all levels of the organization.

With extensive programing for women in the U.S., Catherine Mavriplis, an associate professor of mechanical engineering, has developed a number of activities for advancing and empowering women at the university since her arrival in 2008. These led to the award to the University of Ottawa of a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (hereafter referred to as the “Chair”) for the period 2011-2016, funded by NSERC, an industrial partner, Pratt & Whitney Canada, and the University of Ottawa. Under the Chair program, which covers all of Ontario, all fields of science and engineering have been covered in a number of workshops for women of all ages—young girls through

to women leaders—and other career development activities have been held at the university and at other locations.

Activities Offered

Mentoring Program

The mentoring program establishes a link between regular faculty members (the mentees) and more experienced colleagues (the mentors). Mentors provide support, information, and advice as well as share experiences that can help faculty better negotiate the demands of a complex and constantly changing academic world. The mentoring comes in two formats: individual and group mentoring. In the individual program, the mentee meets monthly with an appointed mentor for a period of up to twelve months. In the group program, the Centre organizes monthly meetings during the academic calendar (September to April) for up to ten mentee professors of the same rank from various faculties and two mentors at a superior rank. During an initial brainstorm session, the group agrees on a list of topics for discussion through the year. For the most part, professors self-identify for the mentoring program; however, a direct email to recruit mentees is sent to professors in the relevant category for the different groups (e.g., assistant professors, associate professors) and it generates a flurry of interest, mostly from women faculty members (Bujaki et al.).

Numerous studies (Taylor) have shown that, generally, women seek more social support to deal with stress, provide more social support to others, and engage more actively in their social networks; this could explain why the mentoring program is more popular among women faculty members. Although we cannot speak to the individual relationships (as these are confidential), the topic of being a parent has been brought up in every group when discussing tenure and/or promotion dossiers (e.g., how best to address gaps) and work-life balance.

Writing in the Company of Others

Social support encourages female participation not only in the mentoring program but also in the writing initiatives organised by the Centre where more than 85 percent of participants are female. The opportunity for faculty members to write in the company of colleagues promotes social support that is often lacking in the academic environment and allows leadership development through interactions among professors, centred on the writing practice and process.

The Centre started focusing on faculty writing in 2010 upon request from a faculty member mother. Recognising herself as one of the women described by Grant as needing space and time away from home and office routines, Professor Rhonda Pyper, from the Telfer School of Management, approached the Centre to publicise the five-day residential writing retreat she was organizing

during the October 2010 reading week. The Centre promoted the Women Who Write retreat, took over the logistics (hotel communication, dietary restrictions, carpooling, etc.), and provided financial support for half the cost of the retreat (four hundred dollars per participant) for twelve professors from six different faculties.

Following the retreat's success, and based on ongoing feedback from participants, the Centre has since broadened its focus on writing by adding three-day mini-retreats on campus during reading weeks (October and February) as well as one-day writing events on a monthly basis during the academic year. The writing events on campus allow those who find it difficult to be away from home (especially those with young children) to reserve some time towards their research. These successful undertakings have led us to set up a permanent meeting room for the Centre where we can now hold regular writing days at a low cost, including summer writing days.

Career Development Workshops for Women Professors

Among the many activities for women organised by the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering, the FORWARD to Professorship workshop for aspiring and tenure-track professors in science and engineering, and the Take the Final Step workshop for associate professors in science and engineering aspiring to promotion to the rank of full professor are significant initiatives benefiting mothers or aspiring mothers. Based on their success and track record, the national network of NSERC Chairs for Women has adopted the two workshops to be delivered across Canada. Other in-person Chair activities include free yoga and Zumba classes on campus, networking events, alumnae mentoring breakfasts, a distinguished lecture series, graduate research competitions, and outreach to girls. Online features of successful professional women in these fields, interdisciplinary research on women's career development in science and engineering (in sociology, education, women's studies and history), and policy work (including rights while on maternity leave for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars) also contribute to a positive environment for academic women and mothers. In particular, a study of mothers' influences on daughters' choices for science and engineering has recently been completed and publications are forthcoming (NSERC/Pratt & Whitney "Chair for Women").

The two faculty development workshops at the University of Ottawa were based on a long history and experience with the FORWARD to Professorship workshop developed in the U.S. under funding from the U.S. National Science Foundation ADVANCE program (Heller et al). Some of the results mentioned here are gathered from the seventeen-year experience with the FORWARD program. Overall, the program has supported over thirteen hundred doctoral women scientists, many of whom are mothers. In fact, the fifty-five offerings

of the FORWARD to Professorship workshop often hosted very visibly pregnant participants, and sometimes the organizers and speakers were pregnant as well. As mothers organizing these events, the workshop developers were keenly aware of the challenges of motherhood in academe and designed special sessions to discuss work-life balance and how to handle pregnancy and early motherhood in the job search or the pre-tenure phase. In the U.S., the maternity leave provisions are nowhere near as generous or as clear as in Canada: there are no national provisions other than the 1993 Family Medical Leave Act, which allows eligible employees of a covered employer to take job-protected, unpaid leave for up to twelve weeks (“*The Family Medical Leave Act*”). Furthermore, this act was fairly underused or unfamiliar to faculty members and universities until several years later. Even universities that were proactive enough to develop family-friendly policies, as the University of California at Berkeley did in 1998, found that the policies were not in use or familiar to the faculty members (Mason and Goulden).

The FORWARD to Professorship workshop addresses the “nuts and bolts” of obtaining and thriving in a tenure-track assistant professorship in science and/or engineering. Although most sessions focus on skills development in the three areas of tenure evaluation—i.e., research, teaching and service—the overall ambiance of the workshop is one of support, networking, and mentoring for women professors, current or aspiring. Motherhood is discussed extensively in the work-life balance sessions as well as in the negotiation and administrative sessions. Whether it be about how to deal with teaching loads and the planning of research and funding around pregnancy and maternity leave, or simply scheduling of faculty meetings in the late afternoon when many mothers need to collect their children from day care, balancing pregnancy and childcare in an ultra-competitive and male-dominated academic arena is challenging and ends up being an issue in many of the sessions (NSERC/Pratt & Whitney “FORWARD to Professorship”).

Similarly, the Take the Final Step workshop addresses the mechanics and encouragement for applying for promotion to the rank of full professor. With several maternity leaves or setbacks due to motherhood in their academic path, women associate professors often lag behind their male colleagues by a number of years for promotion to full professor (Ornstein et al.). In fact, many women professors never reach the top rank. Several of these women report being discouraged by their department chairs and deans to put their promotion dossiers forward, while observing their younger, less accomplished male colleagues apply early in some cases and succeed. This midcareer workshop features a special session on politics and the inevitable forces at play in promotion and career development and how to deal with them. A work-life balance session is also a must and heavily focuses on handling childcare, eldercare and adolescents

as well as marital issues in a much different light than at the pre-tenure stage. (NSERC/Pratt & Whitney Canada Chair “Take the Final Step”; WISE Atlantic “Step Up”; WWEST “Promotion to Professorship”).

Reactions from Faculty Members

The Centre and the Chair offer a large number of activities to support faculty. As mentioned before, the activities are open to all faculty (men and women), but it seems that they are more appealing to women. We report here on the writing initiative as an example. The Centre offers single day and three-day mini-retreats on campus and five-day residential retreats. The statistics speak for themselves: from a total of 156 different participants since 2010, only thirty-eight have been men. The Centre was able to organise one all-male retreat in 2011 but has never again since. Looking at participant days (e.g., if a faculty member took part in a five-day residential retreat and a three-day on campus mini-retreat, that counts for eight participant days), out of a total of 1,536 participant-days, 1,396 are women (90.8 percent).

The writing initiative at the University of Ottawa was not designed with theories of social support (Barrera) and organisational support (Eisenberger et al.) in mind, but such theories may explain the fact that being part of a group increases enthusiasm towards the task of writing and produces greater writing productivity. Social support is defined as enhancing the perception of personal control in one’s life experience (Albrecht and Adelman) and includes the concept of social network, the feeling of belonging to a group (Gottlieb). Comments from participants suggest that, during the writing days, they feel that they become part of a social network that brings them psychological support; they have access to a group that they can rely on to get professional and personal support when needed:

- *“I’m feeling less isolated.”*
- *“I met many new colleagues and exchanged experiences and strategies with them.”*

Studies reviewed by Hogan and Najarian have shown that having social support reduces stress, increases the feeling of being competent, improves collaboration and the sharing of resources, and provides a feeling of being more in control. Again, this is reflected in the participants’ comments:

- *“Reduced my anxiety and gave me the confidence that I can complete this revision by the due date.”*
- *“Confirmed that I was not the only one who finds writing challenging.”*

According to the theory of perceived organizational support, employees who perceive that their well-being is looked after and that their contribution is valued exhibit an increase in motivation, satisfaction, emotional commitment, work performance, and a sense of belonging (Eisenberger). By providing a pleasant room dedicated to writing, setting up facilities to facilitate the task, and favouring interaction between participants, the University of Ottawa is showing that the faculty's well-being is important. Such care is noted by participants:

- *"I have felt supported in my work and felt I was part of a team."*
- *"I'm impressed by the quality of the service and the attention that is given to our work."*
- *"I feel extremely fortunate to be working at an institution which supports innovative initiatives."*

Writing in a group may also produce competition. Being surrounded by colleagues whose publication projects are advancing could create a feeling of emulation and encourage some professors to perform as well as, or even better than, their colleagues.

- *"There is a subtle peer pressure to keep active."*
- *"It was motivating to know everyone around me was working hard."*

At every writing event, participants are asked to fill in a short evaluation form, a mix of open and Likert scale questions. The open questions include whether they have accomplished the objectives they had set for themselves and whether the writing event has contributed to their writing productivity.

Participants' comments from over two hundred evaluations (n=170 for on-campus events, n=45 for residential retreats) reveal three main benefits of writing events: increased productivity helped by being away from their normal environment; increased social support and validation that writing is a difficult, yet an important task; and increased motivation for making research and writing commitments a priority again.

However, not all women faculty decide to attend: Some women feel they would not benefit from the writing events (e.g., writing days or retreats are not for them as they work better in their office or at home). Some women do not want people to believe that their success is only due to some special favour that they received through a program targeting women. Some women, who simply get the job done, feel that they do not need any support to succeed.

In April 2015, we surveyed mothers (with children under their care) who participated in the residential writing retreats and the on-campus mini-retreats to find out what influenced their choice (to attend residential vs. on-campus

retreats) and whether there was any barrier related to motherhood that affected that choice. Of the forty-three responses we obtained from sixty-eight women queried who attended the retreats, thirty-three (77 percent) said they had children at home. Only five (15 percent) of those thirty-three said that being a mother was not a factor influencing their choice of retreat. Two of these five said their husbands helped with childcare so they could manage the retreat. Twenty-eight of the thirty-three mothers (85 percent), however, answered that being a mother did influence their choice of retreat. Two spoke of their partners working and living in another city. One was a single parent of children with disabilities. Two felt they could only afford time away for one or two conferences a year and could therefore not spend the time on a writing retreat. Two mentioned teaching responsibilities that made their participation in the retreats difficult (the Faculty of Education conducts classes during the reading weeks due to teaching practicum schedules). Thirteen of the thirty-three (39 percent) said childcare responsibilities did not allow them to attend the residential retreat. Some women did attend but spoke of the need for extensive planning and organization in order for them to attend; others who were able to attend spoke of the need to concentrate on their writing without the constant interruptions of childcare responsibilities. For example, one mother wrote:

•“I chose the residential retreat even though I have small kids because I need to get fully engrossed in my writing, and not to be distracted by the daily routines and chores of parenting that fill my head, even when at work on campus.”

Overall, the mothers expressed their appreciation for the writing retreats, finding them particularly useful for writing productivity. As one mother said:

•“It happened that I chose to attend the residential retreat instead of a conference because I knew that by going to the retreat I could finish an article. That’s what I did last year and I had the nice surprise of winning a prize for the article I wrote during the retreat.”

Discussion

The menu of activities offered by the two programs described was intended to support and empower faculty members, women and mothers in particular, in tenure-track and tenured academic positions. In effect, these activities serve to help navigate the academic environment of professors, one which increasingly demands a wide variety of skills and an ever-stretching timetable to answer not only to the requirements of research, teaching and service, but also to a myriad

of new demands such as outreach, new procedures (e.g., providing access for students with disabilities, accreditation, and quality control), and community engagement. The activities serve as faculty development and offer traditional as well as peer and near-peer mentoring opportunities, either as a formal mentoring session or an informal one through discussions and conversation. These are important vehicles for women and mothers in particular, who, research has shown, are often excluded from networking and mentoring circles and find little time, because of family responsibilities, to network and to learn, as men do, how to navigate the historically male-dominated academic environment.

Although we expect that these activities help women progress and persist in the academy, it is difficult to measure a direct link between the two. Clearly, the writing retreats, for example, are aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of professors' academic publications. These increases would no doubt contribute to increased promotion and tenure success. However, it is difficult to single out these outcomes as single indicators of success. Indeed, promotion and tenure decisions are as complex as the roles of faculty members and depend on so many aspects of the job. Success is difficult to measure in academe and often appears subjective to those who are being evaluated.

Furthermore, there is no real control group against which to measure the impact of the activities. Professors find their own ways of being productive: some work at home alone, some are involved in intense, fruitful collaborations; some minimize their teaching efforts in favour of research while others devote themselves to teaching wholeheartedly at the expense of their scholarship. The balance is indeed a fine line to walk, one which translates into promotion and tenure decisions that at times seem unfair. How is success defined in academe? And is the definition changing? For example, in the sciences and engineering, a greater involvement with industry is being promoted by the funding agencies.

Although a faculty member may choose to define her own notions of success, promotion and tenure requirements govern chances of employment. The writing retreats were strategically designed to attend to a measurable indicator of success based on the more tangible promotion and tenure requirements. Similarly, in the faculty development workshops—FORWARD and Take the Final Step—a focus on writing research and grant proposals and on graduate student time management aims to increase research productivity along an established indicator of success. A more focused study to measure the outcomes of our activities—via such definable indicators of success such as a control group of faculty members who do not participate in our activities—would be able to draw more definite conclusions.

What we can say is that the activities are deemed very useful by those who partake in them. The respondents clearly indicate that the opportunities offered helped them focus on aspects of their contributions in a more strategic way and

that they helped them with productivity, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. They enjoyed social support that is often lacking in disciplinary departments, especially for isolated women in underrepresented fields such as the physical sciences, computer science, and engineering. They exhibited more empowerment and motivation. In essence, the activities helped them boost their self-efficacy. Will this translate into persistence and progression of women and mothers in academe? We think so. The more mothers find ways to balance their home life with their work realities, and the more they communicate their success and satisfaction in that balance to incoming candidates (students and aspiring professors), the more women will consider academe as a viable option for themselves. Increasing the critical mass of women and mothers in male-dominated arenas will be most important to significantly influencing gender equity and to significantly influencing the academic environment to change.

Conclusions

In order to facilitate the participation and success of women and mothers in particular in academic tenure-track and tenured positions, inexpensive and easy to organize events are simple approaches to supporting mothers in the tenure track who perceive the activities as beneficial to their productivity. Mothers find value in participating in these events and enjoy social support as well as self-imposed peer pressure to motivate them to perform. Not all women are comfortable with these initiatives and several choose not to participate; however, as events organized for men and women alike, the response has been overwhelmingly from women, and mothers in particular.

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Folio

Editor's Notes

It's a great pleasure to feature Marilyn Taylor in this issue of *Folio*. Marilyn Taylor was named Poet Laureate of the City of Milwaukee in 2004 and 2005, and in 2009 was appointed to a two-year term as Poet Laureate of the state of Wisconsin. She is the author of six collections of poetry, most recently *Going Wrong* (2009). Her poetry has also appeared in many anthologies and journals, including *The American Scholar*, *Poetry*, *Able Muse*, *Poetry Daily*, *Measure*, *Poemeleon*, and *Mezzo Cammin*. Taylor served as a Contributing Editor for *The Writer* magazine, where her widely read "Poet to Poet" column on the craft of poetry appeared bimonthly for five years. Taylor taught poetry and poetics for fifteen years at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Currently, she teaches community writing workshops throughout—and beyond—her home state of Wisconsin.

Poet A. E. Stallings, a 2011 MacArthur Fellow, has praised Taylor's work for its ability to tackle "the big themes: aging and death, love and its betrayals, the secrets lurking beneath the surface of family life," while poet and editor Ronald Wallace has described Taylor as an "effortless formalist" whose work ranges "from hilarity to heartbreak," and showcases her genius for finding "wisdom in the wisecrack, profundity in the pratfall, eloquence in the everyday." In this selection, readers will encounter rhythmically rich, unforgettably detailed poems that shine welcome light into the hidden corners of domestic and civic life.

Taylor is particularly attuned to the shifts of perspective that arrive with time's passage and gives voice to a compelling range of maternal experiences. Her verse transports readers through the dizzying range of emotions seemingly ordinary events can spark, from the child's memories of a mother ensconced in a suburban home (the "powdered presence" viewed from a "rain-glossed school bus"), to the adult's perceptive view of adolescent longing made mani-

fest when a seat-companion on a plane “turns and smiles/with pleasure at the girl across the aisle.”

This ability to inhabit multiple perspectives is amply displayed in “Family Picnic,” a poem that also reveals the deep-rooted empathy that underpins Taylor’s characteristic wit. In the opening stanza, the speaker evokes the intimacy of familial life, sharing the confidence that “Life hasn’t been easy for Betsy since turned/thirteen.” Taylor shifts her lens to bring the sulky teen into closer view:

just look at her, the sniffy way
 she sits all by herself, wincing with scorn
 at her noisy cousins lining up to play
 a pick-up softball game before the day
 runs out. *Childish*, she mutters from the chair
 in which she lounges, tossing back her hair.

Though adults soon join the game, Betsy maintains her “careful distance,” struggling mightily, as Taylor’s astutely drawn details imply, to negotiate the challenges of adolescent individuation within the bounds of gender expectations. The comedic aspects of these familiar struggles are further underscored by the pleasure of rhyme.

Poets frequently evoke the old truism that rhymes are scarce in English, especially when compared to the Romance languages from which our prosody is largely derived. Yet in the hands of skillful practitioners, this apparent dearth goes unnoticed. Taylor’s use of rhyme, slant rhyme, and assonance is stealthy and strategic, a means of upending expectations and recreating in readers a sudden shock of insight. When “Family Picnic” closes with the lines “. . . just in case we take her for that splendid child Betsy,/who left us only very recently,” she powerfully evokes a sense of passing time.

Growing up’s no picnic, and Taylor’s verse offers a humorous take on an adolescent’s transformation into the stranger a family no longer recognizes. Though the poem masquerades as “light verse,” this is an undeniably intelligent and finely crafted poem.

Whatever the triggering subject, Taylor’s view of maternal identity remains refreshingly honest. Empty nesters who endure the humble-bragging of their offspring will enjoy “Open Letter to Grownup Kids Who Call Home.” While the poem offers a satirical glance at parent-child relations, it also reveals a sometimes forgotten truth: that parents are in full possession of independent lives. Taylor’s willingness to confront the darker sides of maternal bonds is evident in “Sestina to My Mother,” “At the End,” and “In Other News,” all of which offer frank descriptions of maternal anger that young women must flee, regardless of the knowledge that such rage that is fueled by years of pain and

disappointment. With these poems, Taylor mines a tradition that hearkens back to fairy tales and murder ballads, evoking with stunning clarity the terrifying mix of fear and love implicit within the maternal archetype.

But darkness is not all. Taylor is equally engaged with another vital strand of literary tradition—one that posits poetry as a central force in civic life. Some of her most affecting poems respond to grieving mothers, especially those whose children have met untimely deaths through illness and war.

Though a poet often writes in solitude, one of the joys of verse is that it reflects our deepest kinship, offering a means of cultural preservation and communal consolation. Taylor is a gifted critic and lecturer whose reflections on poetry and motherhood (following the Folio) are lively, instructive, and not to be missed.

—Jane Satterfield

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

If, in October

I should be driving past a row
of brick-and-shingle bungalows
and maple leaves are sticking to the sidewalk,
and a rain-glossed school bus starts to swing
its yellow bulk around the corner,

there you are again—framed in a wavy
leaded window, watering a long-fingered
philodendron while the Victrola
clatters out Landowska's version of
the Little Preludes through the glass

and I am nine years old again—and you,
the center of my small universe,
are the love of my life, to whose powdered
presence I come home blissfully,
day after dangerous day

utterly innocent of a distant time
when you will turn from me
and withdraw into my archive of losses
that the rising dust will dim,
then darken, then obliterate.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

The Boy on the Plane

The boy on the plane is coming home
from his grandfather's funeral—his first
exposure to the way it's done, how we comb
and scrub and manicure and dress
the body, wiping away the evidence
of life's final squalor. He stares into his lap,
while a half-dream plays along his lips.

On either side of us, the clouds
are climbing into mounded, coalescing
heaps—how voluptuous they look, viewed from the side,
their secret folds and cumulations riding
on shafts of wild, sliding
air. Yawning enormously, the boy turns and smiles
with pleasure at the girl across the aisle.

I think about old men, and of the boy
beside me, how it's almost time
for him; and of the girl he will someday
press against in a cool, darkened room.
And the heaviness I've known
before, that profound wrenching I recognize
grinds forward, and settles into place.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

At the End

In another time, a linen winding sheet
would already have been drawn
about her, the funeral drums by now

would have throbbed their dull tattoo
into the shadows writhing
behind the fire's eye

while a likeness
of her narrow torso, carved
and studded with obsidian

might have been passed from hand
to hand and rubbed against the bellies
of women with child

and a twist of her gray hair
been dipped in oil
and set alight, releasing the essence

of her life's elixir, pricking
the nostrils of her children
and her children's children

whose amber faces nod and shine
like a ring of lanterns
strung around her final flare—

but instead, she lives in this white room
gnawing on a plastic bracelet
as she is emptied, filled and emptied.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

Sestina for My Mother

We never mentioned dying, she and I;
never spoke of passing on, growing old
with grace, wearing lipstick to the last
emergency, all that. But she died. Because
of cigarettes, they said, but I knew better—
her inner fire, untended, guttered out.

When she lay sick, the news had not come out
about the changes (neither she nor I
had seen them coming.) Not knowing any better,
we worried that she'd broken all the old
rules, flouted ancient customs, because
she hadn't done her penance first, her dying last.

*But he's Attila, she hissed to me at last;
he's Norman Bates, before they dragged him out
of the cellar. Benedict Arnold, because
he turned on me. He was Pinkerton, I
the idiot Butterfly. I'll stab the old
bastard through the heart when I get better.*

But she never did get better,
she got weaker, and her fury didn't last;
her face took on the thick sheen of old
ivory as she let herself run out

of time. She could not know that I
was dying too—the nice I, the I she knew—because

I seemed, next to her, so alive. Because
I was getting stronger, better,
even as she blurred and faded. Even as I
saw her breaking up, receding with the last
yellow shreds of the sun. Snuffed out.
But me, me—I'm rekindled by the old

fires. I burn. I have become the wicked old
witch. I am Grendel's mother, because
of her pain. I am the bat out
of Hell. I am Goneril, or better
still, Hecate. And with my wild torch, I
will light her way at last.

(And you'd better not howl, old
man, or beg with your last shout—because
I'm coming, here I come, to cut your black heart out.)

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

In Other News

They called the circumstances *drug-related* when they found her—face-up, open-eyed, bloody, but fully clothed. Witnesses said the murdered girl had not been violated—and you could call that lucky. Her first stroke of luck since the convulsive day she fled from the cold kitchen where her mother spread her fury every morning, black and thick for breakfast, making the corrupted air unfit to breathe. Forcing her out the door. *I'll kill the little bitch* her mother swore *when she comes crawling back from god-knows-where*—a comment the police chose to ignore, because it hardly mattered anymore.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

The Ice Cave

*For Rachel, after the death
of her young daughter*

She is living here now, where the cold
is her consort, the lover she clasps
with her arms and legs, from whose gray
blanket she tears each breath.

All around her, ice is in bloom—
tiny glass buds keep swelling
from hairline fissures
in the stone. The buried river

cuts close, a dark ventricle
thick with sorrow. Moisture floods
her face, pools at her feet.
In time, a tower of ice

will grow around her, taking
the shape of an old woman
and visitors will say, *Look at her,
how she weeps into her hands.*

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

To the Mother of a Dead Marine

Your boy once touched me, yes. I knew you knew
when your wet, reddened gaze drilled into me,
groped through my clothes for signs, some residue
of him—some lusciousness of mine that he
had craved, that might have driven his desire
for things perilous, poisonous, out-of-bounds.
Could I have been the beast he rode to war?
The battle mounted in his sleep, the rounds
of ammunition draped like unblown blossoms
round his neck? Could I have somehow flung
myself against the wall of his obsessions,
leaving spells and curses on his tongue?
Your fingers tighten, ready to engage
the delicate hair-trigger of your rage.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

Family Picnic

Life hasn't been easy for Betsy since she turned thirteen—just look at her, the sniffy way she sits all by herself, wincing with scorn at her noisy cousins lining up to play a pick-up softball game before the day runs out. Childish, she mutters from the chair in which she lounges, tossing back her hair.

But now, two uncles and a favorite aunt are filling in at right field and third base; Betsy's breathing quickens, but she can't stop buffing her nails, sucking in her face, keeping her careful distance—just in case we take her for that splendid child Betsy, who left us only very recently.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

Tercets from the Train

Human dramas implode without trace.

—Marge Piercy

Gorgeous, they are gorgeous, these two women getting
on the train, one in lime green silk, black hair
a mile wide, the other slim as a whip, coiled

in red linen. Their two small boys, grinning,
have squirmed into facing seats, bubbling with spare
energy, the cuffs of their designer jeanlets rolled

at the ankles, their studded shirts glinting.
I overhear the women talking over what to wear
to some convention (should it be the gold

Armani or the St. Laurent?) while the boys are gazing
through the rain-spattered window, practicing their
locomotive lingo in shrill, five-year-old

voices, demanding information: are we going
faster than a plane, where is the engineer,
does this train have electricity or coal?

But the women's eyes are fierce, they are grumbling
over Lord & Taylor, which was once a store
to be reckoned with, although the one with wild

hair points out that even Bloomingdale's is growing
more K-Martish than it ever was before.

Don't you interrupt me, child,

she hisses to the boy who wonders why the train is grinding
so slowly through the towns, and where
the bathroom is and what the ticket-man is called

until she bends over him, glaring
from beneath her shadowed eyes, a crimson flare
on either cheek. *You're interrupting me,* she growls.

Now you'll be sorry. His mouth is gaping
as the flat of her hand splits the air,
annihilating two long rows of smiles.

I warned you, didn't I, darling?
Now don't you dare cry. Don't you dare.
Up and down the aisle, the silence howls.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

Open Letter to Grownup Kids Who Call Home

It's not that we don't like it when you phone us—
it's wonderful to have you on the line;
we're pleased about your friends, your house, your bonus,
and know we shouldn't worry, you're just fine.

Well, honey, we're not worried in the slightest;
we know that you are competent and wise,
undoubtedly the sweetest and the brightest
survivor of those Happy Meals with fries

But lately we have other obligations,
the stuff that we have time (at last) to do—
it could be work, it could be recreation,
but hasn't got a thing to do with you.

It might involve a cruise to Casablanca
or biking from Saint Cloud to Saskatoon
or working as a nurse in Sri Lanka
or going bowling every afternoon

So when you call to say you've done it Your Way,
you're doing great, we're listening to you—
but even so, our eyes are on the doorway
that in a minute we'll be bolting through.

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

Mother as Poet/Poet as Mother

Let me put it this way: it is probably not an exaggeration to suggest that nearly every poem written by a mother about motherhood—or, for that matter, by a daughter about daughterhood—is accompanied by a little ghost of guilt, busily spinning excuses, digressions, and scams. The poet Stephen Dunn, for example (obviously neither mother nor daughter, but in this case absolutely spot-on) refers to this sort of uneasiness in his poem titled “The Routine Things Around the House,” which begins like this:

*When Mother died
I thought: now I'll have a death poem.
That was unforgivable. . .*

Ah yes. Unforgivable, we mother/daughter poets sigh to ourselves—it's time now for the death poem. The grief poem. The terrified poem, or even the celebratory one. The piece we've been hoping to write as an honest, heartfelt expression of emotion, but—and we have to admit it—one that we know will also be coolly examined by total strangers, who might be on the lookout for exaggeration, sentimentality, melodrama, or some other severe transgression.

Do we therefore feel compelled to placate these shadowy third parties by diluting the emotional intensity of our poems? Do we sacrifice complete candor by trying for gracefulness, for artistry? And if we do, will that automatically add an unmistakable sprinkle of artificiality to our finished work?

Inexperienced poets usually don't let such questions bother them very much. They charge ahead and write what they feel, and their peers

(i.e. their readers) are likely to understand this. But as we grow more experienced and our potential audience more discerning, we begin to realize that a poem often becomes more effective when the heat is turned down a bit, in favor of control and congruity. Not always. Often.

But what happens to the veracity factor, especially in mother/daughter poems if the heat's turned down? There is probably no human relationship more complicated, nor is its poetry more likely to include feelings of pain, anger, longing, delight, etc. But the wise poet knows that such emotions probably shouldn't be allowed to go out into the world without protective gear. A lamentation, for example, needs to divulge its specific motivation, its context. Anger is often more effectively communicated in the third person than in the first, perhaps presented as a scenario, (no matter how appalling) or "story" rather than simply reproduced on the page. An indignant rant can be funneled into one jarring observation in particular.

In this way, a mother or a daughter can preserve her original honest impulse for writing the poem—e.g. a perceived betrayal? A memorable moment? An untimely death? A lesson learned?— in a way that permits her to use, even to the point of artistic exploitation, the backdrop of our own society, its customs, rules, recognizable conventions, taboos. Many of the best poems from this emotionally loaded subgenre will, in fact, reveal mastery of this approach, thereby busting a plethora of ghosts.

Book Reviews

Not Exactly as Planned: A Memoir of Adoption, Secrets and Abiding Love

Linda Rosenbaum
Bradford: Demeter Press, 2014

REVIEWED BY BRUNA ALVAREZ

Not Exactly as Planned is an autobiographical story by Linda Rosenbaum about her experience as a mother of two children adopted at birth (Michel and Sarah). Linda's son Michel was diagnosed at age six with irreversible brain damage from fetal alcohol syndrome.

Although the story is focused on Rosenbaum's motherhood experience, she also describes some episodes from her own childhood, which give context to explain her point of view about family secrets. Because of her grandmother's mental illness, that was maintained in secret, Linda consciously decides not to keep secrets in her own family. The book's narrative turns around Linda's struggle to accept her own family secrets.

Moving from Detroit to Washington, Linda eventually arrived in Canada, to Toronto Island. There she met Robert, whom she married. When they decided to have a child, Linda was unable to get pregnant due to polycystic ovarian syndrome. After spending a year trying, Linda and Robert decided to adopt. In Canada, adoption is not considered a secret, as it is in some other countries. So they let people know that they were looking for a birth mother

to offer them a child in adoption. One interesting feature of this book is the author's experiences with the two birth mothers of her children, which are totally different. The first one was a woman living with addiction from the same neighborhood where Linda and Robert were living, who didn't want to know anything about the baby or his future adoptive parents. This situation obliged Linda to keep a family secret about the identity of her son's birth mother, because they often met on the island. The second birth mother phoned the author's family in response to a newspaper ad. Although it was an open adoption, it wasn't until eighteen years later that the birth mother met in person with the author's family and their daughter. But they had been in phone contact since the birth.

Although the title of the book refers to the older son's illness, diagnosed when he was six years old, the author doesn't focus her story on her son's difficulties, but rather on how they have managed his differences. She reveals moments of anxiety, guilty and mother blame before they were told that their son had fetal alcohol syndrome. From that point, she details a story of the struggle to help Michel meet his goals, like having a Bar Mitzvah. Linda is Jewish, and although Robert isn't, they give a religious education to their children.

Far from the feeling of "it's not a big deal if you have a child with fetal alcohol syndrome" or "you can do the same as others," Linda describes with bittersweet words the very difficult moments of everyday life. For example, she describes the series of events that brought Michel to live in an institution for one year and her fears that he may never live without assistance. The secret of the book's narrative is that Linda explains all struggle in a positive way, and uses few—but very harsh—words explaining the real everyday difficulties.

This book shows how a difficult situation has been managed and described in a matter-of-fact way, without avoiding mentioning the great difficulties. At the same time, it's not a story about heroes. Rather, it is a story of a human life full of contradictions, and of finding happiness in the midst of the struggle to accept a new, never-before-imagined reality.

This book is a private story that is made public in order to make visible the struggles of a mother and family with a special-needs child. At the same time, this particular story shows us that family happiness is also possible, and that despite the challenges she faced, Rosenbaum was able to become a mother and a writer: <http://www.lindarosenbaum.com>.

Biting the Moon: A Memoir of Feminism and Motherhood

Joanne S. Frye
Syracuse University Press, 2012

REVIEWED BY MAYA E. BHAVE

Reading Joanne Frye's memoir, *Biting the Moon: A Memoir of Feminism and Motherhood*, is akin to peering through a glass window into someone's soul, and leaving wondering if we should have lingered so long. Frye examines her multi-layered, and often conflicting social roles as wife, divorcee and single-mother, exploring what she calls the "detritus of her former life" (47), whilst wrestling to connect her political and personal spheres. She opens the memoir recounting the early months after her ex-husband's suicide, but frames the rest of her piece chronologically, recalling the early days of their marriage and life as parents to two daughters. She documents her life as a doctoral student with a young toddler underfoot, noting she "was unable to carve out real writing time" (53). Yet her problems don't end there, as she struggles with existential questions related to finishing her degree, finding time for herself and ways to connect to her wider social community. She desperately wants to figure out how to reconcile being a wife and independent woman, as these divergent roles vex her and leave her emphatically stating, "it was as a wife, not as a mother, that I felt entrapped," (58). In a similar vein, after her divorce she states, "I am not certain who I am" (120), yet notes she had chosen to make a life of "these conflicting pieces" (172).

Four things thankfully save Frye from utter despair: her two children (Kara and Adriane), her writing and teaching. She recaps warm, intimate stories with her daughters as she attempts to raise strong women with a strong sense of self worth and love. Yet beyond her daughters' devotion, she turns to literature, to *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* or *The Golden Notebook* to find herself. It is in those stories that she finds both her nascent voice and a sense that she is not fully alone. Her vivid descriptions of academia resonated with me, as she chronicles her journey from non-tenured faculty member to public lecturer, designer of a women's studies major, and eventually to tenured professor. Her pains at balancing being mother, professor, and feminist are felt on every page, yet there are moments of positive optimism such as family get-togethers with colleagues or when she brings her own story (teacher as text) into the classroom. Such occasions bring her unbridled joy as she bridges her personal and professional spheres.

I also appreciated Frye's contemplations about lost relationships in her life. She asks, who are we when people leave our lives? How do we survive when people betray us, leave unexpectedly or slowly distance themselves? Although such chasms leave us flummoxed, she asserts that a re-shaking of the kaleidoscope allows a perspective that was not seen prior, and thus these aforementioned difficult absences actually "nourished the present" (286). She shows us that lost relationships do not deplete us, but rather those people continue to speak into our lives in unique ways, showing that we are stronger, more capable and more resilient than we imagined. It is in such forthright analyses that Frye illuminates layers of internal female strength, often buried beneath our scarred surfaces.

I connected on many levels to her deconstruction of feminism, academia, and motherhood; however, her constant railing against her ex-husband left me feeling uneasy. I questioned whether all the vitriolic details were necessary or just bitter aftereffects of her divorce. It wasn't until long after I was finished reading that I recognized that her penned vulnerability accomplished her goal to expose her wounds in order that I might examine my own. As such, I turned every page reflecting on whether my marriage had similar schisms, how my children were impacted by me, and if all of my own goals could be fully actualized.

It is in the last few pages, reflecting on the birth of her new grandson in London, that Frye seems to stop such questioning, and begins to enjoy the journey as a process, rather than an end. Looking up at the moon, eclipsed by clouds (thus the title of her memoir) she notices that the changing light illuminates areas not exposed prior. Frye finds that in this new birth, her discordant life pieces seem to have found unity and meaning. Maybe that is the true value in this memoir: that all of us can find change, not as completely daunting, but rather as a chance to start anew.

Anybody's Miracle

Laura Hercher

Wellfleet, MA: Herring River Press, 2013

REVIEWED BY RITA BODE

In *Anybody's Miracle*, Laura Hercher explores the desire for parenthood, and the challenges and emotions that parenthood evokes, both familiar and unexpected. Her handling of these subjects considers the ethical and legal is-

sues that shifting societal norms and evolving reproductive technologies are raising.

Hercher has published scholarly articles in her area of expertise – she is a genetic counsellor and faculty member in the Genetics Program at Sarah Lawrence College – but *Anybody's Miracle* is her first novel. While she draws on her professional background, the novel is a successful work of fiction with vivid characters and strong story lines.

Anybody's Miracle centres on three groups of characters: Robin and John are a young middle-class couple having difficulty conceiving. Hercher depicts them from Robin's point-of-view. Childless, Robin sees children everywhere. After she and John undergo invitro fertilization, Robin becomes pregnant, and despite a serious complication that threatens her life, she refuses to terminate her pregnancy. Her risk ends happily and she gives birth to identical twin boys.

The next group consists, initially, of two friends, Lindsay and Meredith, as Meredith accompanies Lindsay to China to bring back Lindsay's adopted baby girl, Lily. Through Lindsay, Hercher introduces the topic of foreign, cross-cultural and cross-racial adoptions, but Meredith and her future family become the real link to the novel's other groups. The third group is another couple: Robin's brother, Mickey, a social activist lawyer, and his partner, Caleb, who yearns for a family, while determinedly refusing to tell his parents about his homosexuality.

In bringing these groups together, Hercher humanizes central ethical questions about the beginnings of life, genetic connections, parent and child bonds, and parental and relational rights. Robin and John donate their surplus embryos for reproductive purposes, the only option that Robin's religious convictions will tolerate. Her obsession with the remaining embryos—she sees them as her children's "brothers and sisters" (102)—especially as she longs for a daughter, results in some bizarre behaviour, and leads her to identify a little girl who might be theirs biologically. She briefly meets the child's mother who turns out to be Lindsay's friend, Meredith. That Meredith and her husband owe their daughter Sophie's birth to Robin's and John's embryo is confirmed when Sophie is diagnosed with leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant. Through the reproductive clinic's intervention, Robin and John have their twins tested, and when one is a match, they agree to the procedure to save Sophie, but misunderstandings ensue when Meredith recognizes Robin as the woman she suspected of stalking Sophie.

Meredith's fear that Robin and John may try to claim Sophie since she is biologically theirs does not seem so far-fetched in light of Robin's attachment to the embryos. Both families hire lawyers. Knowing these plot details detracts little from the novel for the focus throughout is on how the characters

handle events. Hercher effectively balances perspectives placing one opposing view not just against but within the context of another.

As the situation between these families unfolds, biological and relational claims play out in another way when Caleb has a bad accident, and his hostile parents refuse to let Mickey see him. “I am not his next of kin. I am not a family member” (300), he tells Robin, explaining that his loving relationship has no legal standing. Hercher deliberately juxtaposes this situation with the conflicts surrounding Sophie to suggest the complex nature of kinship and relationship rights, showing that these issues go beyond the particulars of any one situation.

The novel’s several mother figures provide interesting contrasts. Robin and Meredith emerge as surprisingly alike in their intensity. Lindsay, no less loving but more easy-going, offers an appealing contrast in her relaxed acceptance of Lily who, with all her oddities, thrives. The novel’s events relegate this mother and daughter to the sidelines, but whenever they appear, they draw attention and provide humour.

The novel plays out against the backdrop of the famous rivalry between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees with the Boston team finally advancing to the 2004 World Series playoffs to break the Bambino’s curse. Both Robin’s and Meredith’s families are baseball fans. Hercher uses the game successfully as a reminder that curses can be reversed and that effort is as significant as luck in desired results. She provides a satisfactory conclusion without diminishing the characters’ emotional and psychological struggles as her concern is less with her characters resolving all their problems and more with the process of finding fulfilling lives amidst ongoing challenges.

Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood

Linda Rose Ennis, ed.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014

REVIEWED BY JUDITH LAKÄMPER

Linda Rose Ennis’ essay collection consists of 17 essays which aim to “re-visit and reexamine” (1) Sharon Hays’ groundbreaking study, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, published in 1996. Therein Hays argues that according to contemporary intensive mothering (IM) ideology, the ostensibly selfless mother is solely responsible for raising her child, an activity which is

constructed as emotionally absorbing, labor and time intensive, child-centered, expert-guided, and financially expensive. This ideology, Hays posits, is significantly at odds with the dominant ideology of maximizing self-gain in capitalism, and thus puts an inordinate amount of pressure on mothers who try to live according to both ideologies. The present volume successfully reiterates the continued relevance of Hays' model, but also re-contextualizes some of its central tenets within the new and changed frameworks of neoliberalism and attachment parenting, among others.

The volume is separated into three parts and includes a multitude of voices from various disciplines and levels of expertise, giving it the wide perspectival range appropriate to any discussion of a topic so pervasive as contemporary mothering ideology. Authors explore the ramifications of IM ideology in theory and practice, present and future. The first section, "Understanding and Assessing Intensive Mothering," takes a theoretical approach through anthropological, sociological, and psychoanalytic lenses. The essays focus on a wide range of topics from the relationship between IM and neoliberalism to the negotiation between children's and maternal needs. Particularly insightful in this section is Helena Vissing's psychoanalytic inquiry into the effects of the taboos surrounding maternal ambivalence on the development of maternal and infant subjectivity as it emphasizes the productive potential of conflicting emotions which are a central, yet generally unspeakable effect of IM ideology. The second section, "Intensive Mothering Today," offers detailed analyses of single tenets of IM and how they affect maternal practice. Some essays focus specifically on class and consumerism as they both enhance and interfere with IM practices, while others discuss attachment parenting practices such as extended breastfeeding, the use of Sign Language with hearing babies, and Elimination Communication as contemporary techniques to assert and perform IM identities. The essays in the shorter third section, "Intensive Mothering: Staying, Leaving or Changing?" suggest new models of motherhood, ranging from the concept of what the author calls "Best I Can" practices and transpersonal motherhood to a reconceptualization of paternal involvement and the need for solidarity and empowerment in non-competitive maternal relations. While this last section presents multiple approaches to easing the pressure exerted on mothers by IM ideology, it does not fully link up with the politically oriented critique of neoliberalism offered in the preceding sections since none of the new models include concrete suggestions for policy changes. While the volume thus begins to conceptualize solutions to some of the problems it identifies, it also opens up space for further investigation into possible ways to counter the effects of IM ideology.

By giving voice to a wide range of perspectives, Ennis allows contradicting views on intensive mothering to coexist without attempting to dissolve

these contradictions. For instance, while some essays emphasize the way in which the rise of neoliberalism has intensified the demands of motherhood ideologies, others find attachment parenting—albeit not always sufficiently distinguished from beliefs about intensive mothering—to be an important tool of identity work. In this sense, the volume provides a space for contemporary maternal experience and practice to be explored in all of its complexity.

Overall, the volume traces an important development toward the intensification of intensive mothering in the white middle class demographic that, according to Hays, tends to be the forerunner of larger mothering trends. In that sense, it offers a significant contribution to the analysis of contemporary motherhood, extending and contemporizing Hays' model into the twenty-first century. Its broad range of academic level and depth makes the collection an intellectual repository for a wide audience, ranging from mothers who are trying to make sense of their experience to students in women's studies courses to scholars from all disciplines within the field of Motherhood Studies.

Work Cited

Hays, Sharon. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

This Is What a Feminist Slut Looks Like: Perspectives on the SlutWalk Movement

A. Teekah, E. Scholz, M. Friedman and A. O'Reilly, eds.
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2015

REVIEWED BY VIRGINIA LITTLE

This is What a Feminist Slut Looks Like: Perspectives on the SlutWalk Movement is a fresh collection of essays that honors the global impact of the SlutWalk movement. This book furthers the dialogue on sexual abuse and slut shaming, and challenges the cultural climate of victim blaming. It extends the influence of the 2011 inaugural SlutWalk in Toronto by deliberating “how it was done, how it might be done better, how it could be done again, and whether it should be abandoned” (2) in the wake of recent harsh criticism.

The SlutWalk originated in response to sexual abuse allegations at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University. Toronto Police Constable Michael San-

guinetti advised women to stop “dressing like sluts” to avoid being victimized. Implicit in the police statement is the cultural assumption that women who dress provocatively are *asking* to be sexually abused. The SlutWalk movement borrowed from Judith Butler’s work on feminist re-articulation, to transform the word “slut” and reclaim it from its negative connotation. Women participating in SlutWalks achieved this goal through purposefully dressing provocatively and evoking sex-positive language on signs as they marched in rallies through 200 cities across the globe in April 2011.

Throughout this collection of essays, the editors and authors address the criticism(s) that the movement maintains a white, middle-class, heterosexist, ableist status quo, creating more privileged places/spaces for some groups of women, rather than challenging the marginalization of others. For example, while women around the globe fight to not be treated as mere sexual objects, disabled women are struggling to be visible at all. Likewise, women of color are marginalized in the movement. Jacqueline Schiappa engages this dialogue in chapter seven, “Practising Intersectional Critiques: Re-examining Third-Wave Perspectives on Exclusion and White Supremacy in SlutWalk.” In it, she explains the history of the women’s movement and its exclusion of women of color. Even today, with the success of the movement, the SlutWalk creates a safe space primarily for white, middle-class women and excludes minority women’s narratives, which, in turn, perpetuates white supremacy. Schiappa points out that the Walk can be interpreted as having a lack of intersectionality and inherent white supremacy that has often been the critique of the second and now the “third” waves of feminism.

In her chapter, “Sluthood and Survival,” Tracy Citeroni reflects on the SlutWalk’s efficacy in reclaiming the word “slut,” and explores whether or not it should be reclaimed. She notes that while there is solidarity among women rallying in the SlutWalk movement, some women are “sluttier” than others. As an intersectional feminist, she poignantly points out that “sluthood” is dangerous for certain women based upon social identity because 1) it can reinforce negative stereotypes of what society defines a slut to be, and 2) being called a slut affects women of color, working poor, queer, migrant and/or disabled persons differently and more negatively. Adopting sluthood is only effective for so-called “respectable” and “normal” women, particularly those with social and cultural capital. Therefore, marginalized women may not be able to fully claim the power associated with a slut identity the Walk promotes. To outsiders looking at the movement, the slur remains intact with its original meaning and is used to discredit those women who are self-labeled sluts marching in the Walk.

Ultimately, the SlutWalk is a march of solidarity—of women coming together, railing against a culture of victim blaming and slut shaming. The es-

says that comprise *This is What a Feminist Slut Looks Like* address a variety of issues surrounding the movement, including the creation of privileged places and the efficacy of the movement—past, present and future. The authors utilize autobiographical approaches to explain challenges of modern feminism and the SlutWalk, such as white supremacy, ableism, and fatphobia, that have seeped into the SlutWalk. Authors tackle these challenges head on with the feminist perspective of intersectionality. This book is a must read for anyone interested in social movements and feminist reclamation in the twenty-first century.

In Our Hands: The Struggle for U.S. Child Care Policy

Elizabeth Palley and Corey S. Shdaimah
New York: New York University Press

REVIEWED BY KRISTIN MARSH

At the heart of Elizabeth Palley and Corey Shdaimah's *In Our Hands: The Struggle for U.S. Child Care Policy*, is a persistent policy paradox. Although 64.2 percent of mothers with children under six participate in the paid labor force, appropriate child care is notoriously difficult to find and afford. Confoundingly, there is currently no will either at grassroots, advocacy, or legislative levels to coordinate change efforts. Palley and Shdaimah provide a multi-tiered understanding of the history and persistence of our patchwork system of care policies. Culturally, the dominant ideological divide between the public and private spheres renders child care a personal problem to be solved within the family; in this ideological frame, mothers should be caring for young children in the home. Further, the current political climate eschews government spending and, especially, government intervention in our private lives.

Given this ideological backdrop, the authors analyze the history of policy formation and legislative debates over the past 40 years. The U.S. public and congress broadly supported the first and only potentially comprehensive bill (the *Comprehensive Child Development Act*, vetoed by President Nixon in 1971). Successful legislative initiatives since then have been narrow in scope and the resulting patchwork of programs are generally underfunded and divided between those concerned with providing early childhood education and those addressing custodial care needs. Head Start and pre-K programs, for example, focus on the importance of early education and are often only partial

day programs. The Child Care Development Fund, in contrast, targets poor single mothers who need to work. Finally, income tax deductions are inadequate and end up benefitting only families in the middle class.

Next, the authors draw on extensive interview data with leading policy advocates, representing a broad range of national interest-group and policy research organizations that would logically prioritize childcare. These organizational spokespersons and elite leaders provide their perspective on whether and to what extent childcare policies are on their organizational agenda and to what extent broad-based childcare policy is strategically feasible and desirable. By examining, first, the history and current landscape of care policies and, second, the perspective of policy/research organizations, the authors' analysis points to entrenched institutional stasis and an understandable constraining effect of the relationship between policy-making and interest-group advocacy for universal care.

Understanding why we have no universal, comprehensive childcare is one thing; understanding what to do about it is another. The great contribution of *In Our Hands* is that it explains both well. Pally and Shdaimah argue that, if we are to revolutionize childcare policy, we cannot rely on elites to lead the way. Rather, grassroots mobilization and cross-class, cross-race coalition building allows for social movement mobilization on a broad, populist scale. They call for a series of required steps: leveraging facts (raising public awareness); cross-jurisdictional comparison; framing the problem in terms of moral outrage rather than cost-benefit analysis; and articulating a vision for universal care. The lynchpin of their argument is the social movement concept of framing. Re-framing the national discussion about childcare is a huge task, but the authors argue that it is possible to frame the well-being of children as "a moral value or a public good" (208), against opponents of universal childcare, who can be characterized as "antichildren and antiwomen or, even, to tap into conservative rhetoric, as antifamily" (210). In addition, activists need to replace the dominant frame of government retrenchment with one that recognizes the supportive potential of government.

This book represents a meaningful first step toward that important reframing. As the authors point out, we may not all be parents (though many are), but we have all been children. Other countries (notably, France, Sweden, and Denmark; also Canada and England) have effective models for quality, affordable child care. The U.S. military provides a U.S. example of childcare as a public good. While the welfare states scholarship emphasizes differences in welfare state regimes and the limiting policy potential in market-based systems, Palley and Shdaimah argue that—given the right moment and the right strategy—the U.S. public could effectively demand and achieve large-scale reform. Most women work, poor women struggle especially hard to find

reliable care so they can work, and even middle class mothers have a hard time finding quality care at affordable prices, but this growing unmet need for childcare is currently shouldered privately and imperfectly. By finding alliance around a common problem, we can erase mother-blame and raise support for comprehensive childcare as appropriate public response to what truly is a public issue.

Extensively researched and well documented, this study nevertheless lacks a fully-developed theoretical frame. The authors apply social movement theory to the extent that they rely heavily (and usefully) on the concept of framing, but their broader argument could benefit from explicit consideration of political process models of movement emergence/success or theories of power. Once a social movement is mobilized, the question of strategy remains and is not resolved with public-private partnerships or jurisdictional comparison.

In Our Hands is recommended for advanced undergraduate students but is best suited for graduate students in sociology, public policy, political science, social work, and women's studies. Though less accessible for a broader, general audience, *In Our Hands* is a critically important contribution and should be required reading for social policy advocates and analysts.

Mothers of the Nations: Indigenous Mothering as Global Resistance, Reclaiming and Recovery

D. Memee Lavell-Harvard and Kim Anderson, eds.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press 2014

REVIEWED BY NAOMI M. MCPHERSON

Mothers of the Nation: Indigenous Mothering as Global Resistance, Reclaiming and Recovery is a collection of 16 chapters including 11 that focus on mothers/mothering by and about Canadian First Nations women. These authors describe in varying details their efforts at resisting the hegemonic and patriarchal model of mothering and motherhood represented in contemporary Canadian culture. Through resisting this model, they work to reclaim and put into place their indigenous concepts of motherhood and mothering, a reclamation of a critical component of their traditional cultures, and thus, another step in their recovery from a history of colonialism and its abuses. The remaining five chapters comprise the “global” referred to in the title and provide insight into mothers/mothering among the Kabyle-Berbers of North Africa;

women living with HIV and AIDS in Kibera, a slum in Kenya; the impact of sexual violence as a weapon of war used upon indigenous Maya Ixil women in Guatemala; and, the renaissance of Māori concepts and practices of birth and mothering in Aotearoa/New Zealand. While every chapter speaks to issues of resistance, reclaiming and recovery, I present a brief overview of these issues as presented in the four parts of the text.

In part one, “Healthy Beginnings,” Grasshoff/Makilam discusses indigenous meanings of the female, motherhood, and women’s work among the matrilineal Kabyle-Berbers impacted by Christian and later Arab Islamic beliefs. She connects mothering as expressed not only in birthing but also nurturance of the land, the lineage, women’s work and especially women’s artistry in pottery designs. Tait Neufeld takes a historical perspective on the relationship of First Nations peoples to the land, to argue that healthy beginnings for pregnant and lactating women are to be found in food security by reclaiming women’s relationship to the land and their food knowledge. Kadetz picks up on the theme of global resistance to explore how the implementation of the biomedical model of pregnancy and birthing in post-colonial Philippines is actually creating risk for Filipina mothers. He explores the gradual assumption, since in the 1800s, of “authoritative knowledge” and the patriarchal biomedical model that rendered all other models of mothering and birthing “backward, ignorant and naïve.” Tabobondung et al. frame their resistance as reclaiming the knowledge and practices of indigenous midwifery across postcolonial Turtle Island as a means for recovering Indigenous sovereignty.

The concept of resilience connects the four papers in part two, represented in the stories of mothers and mothering in extraordinarily difficult situations. Van Tyler relates the circumstances of nine mothers living with HIV and AIDS “in Kibera, an international mega-slum in Kenya Africa” (91). Their stories are poignant and awe-inspiring as they deal with a lack of work/income, “affordable health care, schools or education for their children” (105). These women’s voices “speak for millions of other mothers struggling to live with HIV/AIDS every day in similar circumstances around the globe” (106). Baskin and McPherson discuss the issue of substance abuse among pregnant and/or parenting Aboriginal women who run a high risk of having their children apprehended not only because of substance abuse but also because they are Aboriginal women and associated, in the prejudicial/racist attitudes of workers in the child welfare system, with concepts of “bad” mothering. Jayakumar revisits Guatemala’s civil war (1960-96), during which 80 percent of those killed were Mayan women, to explore sexual violence as a weapon of war, in this case, brutal rape, torture, enslavement and murder of Indigenous Maya Ixil women. Yet, Maya Ixil women’s resilience shines through “in their acceptance of the children born out of rape” and their cultural connection to and

interaction with their land and ecosystem (143) as a source of healing. Finally, Anderson offers a short photographic project “dedicated to revamping the negative representations of Aboriginal mothers in a current Canadian context” (147). The photos and the women’s comments on their mothering were posted in the city streets of Saskatoon “to make a political statement against the dominant ideology of motherhood” (148); however, thoughts from those who viewed and made meaning from the photos are not included here.

Part three, “Othermothering Spaces and Multiple Moms,” is in many respects about “recovery” of mothering in origin stories of women creator beings and in reclaiming the fractured system of extended kinship where children had many mothers beyond the biological mother. Charbonneau et al. discover the oft-ignored stories of women who are street sex workers and mothers, a context in which Indigenous women are thrice stigmatized as women, as Indigenous, as sex workers. Mothering itself becomes a form of resistance carried out by mothers, grandmothers, aunties and the community of sex workers, extended kin, friends and neighbours. Next, Proverbs invites us to tea and conversation with her two mothers, “one Indigenous and one from a settler background” who share much in common including their status as “women without power” (181). The impact of governmental policies on Indigenous peoples is framed as a conversation between Proverbs’ two mothers that is insightful, reflexive and forgiving. Recognizing the usually negative impact of patriarchy and misogyny on the mother-daughter relationship and its deep roots in the Judeo-Christian origin myth and the role of Eve, Sellers takes on origin stories looking for female creator beings that inform cultural concepts of the feminine as strong, valued and sacred. Finally, Brant’s students in her Aboriginal women’s literature courses, respond to a series of reflections, which results in an emergent maternal pedagogy, a site of resistance and empowerment “for the rebirth and renewal” of Aboriginal women’s maternal legacies (209).

Part four, “Building on the Past to Create a Future,” takes into account the theme of recovery. Connor explores Māori mythology and creation stories as anchors for concepts of traditional Māori mothering, eroded colonisation and missionisation, to explore a “resurgence of Māori mothering and birthing practices within the postcolonial context” (232). Feminist theories and writings “created a space” to scrutinize and untangle the complexities of colonisation and gender, to redefine “the Māori maternal body and ... revive traditional Māori birthing and mothering culture” (242). Fontaine et al. create digital narratives reflecting on how they were mothered, their relationship with their mothers, and their own mothering practices as daughters of women who suffered the residential school system. Each woman journeys through their maternal history to come away spiritually stronger and resilient,

reclaiming Aboriginal mothering and motherhood practices disrupted by the trauma of residential schools. Finally, Marsden relates how she wove Indigenous principles and values into her mothering practices as she raises her children in an urban environment. While one would think that teaching children to be self-sufficient, environmentally aware and upholders of social justice would not meet with resistance, Marsden experienced resistance aplenty and, warrior-like battled her way through it all to raise her children within Indigenous worldviews. Finally, the collection is wrapped up with a conversation between the two editors on the origin and development of this collection, the effect of sharing of stories, of not forgetting and of not remaining silent. Every woman's story needs to be heard, so that womanhood, motherhood and mothering are wrestled back from the patriarchal hegemony women have endured for too long.

This is a fascinating, heartbreaking, and at times horrific collection of Indigenous women's experiences as women and as mothers of and for their nations. Besides the obvious readers in Gender and Women's Studies and Indigenous Studies, this collection of women's lived experiences needs to be required reading in Masculinity Studies, History, and Social Work courses to raise awareness of those who, unless given an opportunity to understand differently, will continue to perpetuate the "system."

Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering

Joanne Minaker and Bryan Hogeem
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press 2015

REVIEWED BY RACHEL O'DONNELL

A new collection by Joanne Minaker and Bryan Hogeem, *Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering*, is a welcome balance of scholarly work and the voices of mothers not often included in academic scholarship. The essays reflect on criminalized mothers, but also on how criminalization impacts mothering, how criminalized women are disciplined as mothers, and the ways in which women resist practices of mothering surveillance. The practices and penalties of criminalization, the editors argue in the introduction, emerge both inside and outside criminal justice systems, and readers are stirred to recognize how "criminalization or the threat of being criminalized impacts all mothers" (2). Criminalized mothers can therefore be seen as a marginalized

group; however, the social and cultural processes involved in criminalizing mothering receive equal attention in this collection.

Undeniably, many contemporary mothers find themselves subject to punishment, state control, social surveillance, and political and economic exclusion. What are the reasons that mothers are criminalized and how does criminalization take place? In Minaker and Hoge's collection, sixteen authors consider a myriad of social relationships that help us answer this question, from material circumstances, lack of community support, the prosecution of substance abusing women, and the way criminalization intersects with maternal monitoring. In the first part of the text, "Discourses and Practices of Maternal Criminalization," maternal regulation and formal criminal justice processing are highlighted, from international law on child abduction (Jaremko Bromwich), indigenous mothers in Canada and their relationships to both the welfare system and the prison system (Landertinger), to the juvenile justice system (Hughes Miller) and pregnancy inside of it (O'Neal and Watson). This section focuses on the conditions under which mothers are subject to violence and illustrates how mothers put through legal and social regulation often remain active agents against such control.

The second section of the book, "Maternal Narratives/Beyond Criminalization," properly frames the first part and manages to amplify mothers' acts of resistance. Here, we listen to mothers' responses to the ways that particular forms of mothering have been criminalized. Most notably, the authors include the voices of mothers who kill their children and the media discourse surrounding it (Park), mothers with HIV, (Greene et al.) and the incarcerated mother of a "disappeared" son in Brazil (Moore). The highlight of this section, however, is an essay that explores the relationship between domestic violence and mother blame. Caroline McDonald-Harker's chapter, "Mothering in the Context of Domestic Abuse and Encounters with Child Protection Services: From Victimized to 'Criminalized' Mothers," details the complicated relationships between Child Protection Services and mothers who are experiencing domestic violence. By developing themes of cultural maternal surveillance alongside women's encounters with child protection agencies and the criminal justice system, McDonald-Harker listens attentively to the collective responses of individuals and urges us to both critically examine these complicated relationships and assist women in accessing the support they need. Likewise, personal narratives of previously incarcerated mothers prove compelling, as the authors not only comment on the racialization, victimization and criminalization of sixteen women in Baltimore City, Maryland, but detail the ways these women experience ongoing punishment from their communities as they are barred from public assistance, many forms of employment, and also in reestablish-

ing relationships with their children (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol). Additional personal stories inform the section.

The concept of the criminal mother as “other” is revisited in many of the essays in the collection, and the theme of maternal deviance surfaces often. The surveillance of mothers and mothering practice remains the most captivating subject matter of the text. Still, closer attention to mothers who are criminalized during pregnancy would be of interest in consideration of the bodily control of women and mothers. Indeed, the punishment of mothers who depart from social norms and the systems that further marginalize particular mothers and forms of care has never been more relevant, as we see that contemporary mothers are often viewed as in need of social regulation or often, punishment, or as the editors write in the introduction “for making unpopular but difficult choices under material and ideological conditions not of their own choosing” (1).

In this international and interdisciplinary work, social justice and mothering practice intersect powerfully with feminist methodology and criminology. Indeed, all the authors ultimately pose a question aimed at social justice: in what ways can we support marginalized mothers instead of criminalizing certain mothering practices and mothers themselves? This new text will be influential in the research on the criminalization of mothering that will undoubtedly follow, and especially valuable to all of us interested in halting the criminalization of mothering and locating resources for the mothers who need it.

Telling Truths: Storying Motherhood

Sheena Wilson and Dianna Davidson, eds.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY LORINDA PETERSON

Maternal literature and theory have proliferated since the nineteenth century, focusing on the dos and don'ts of being a good mother, but contemporary maternity is best illustrated at the intersection of maternal theory and mothering practice. The stories in *Telling Truths: Storying Motherhood*, edited by Sheena Wilson and Diana Davidson, illustrate this intersection, expanding on what Kat Wiebe in “Not My Children” identifies as “the loving lid of the universe,”—the universe that celebrates mothers’ child rearing successes and cradles their sadness when maternity does not go as planned. Each moth-

er-writer in her own way addresses the precariousness of mothering experience, a topic Ann Sutherland explores in “Behind the Gate.” They document childbirth, child death, and the myriad experiences mothers and children share.

Every story in *Telling Truths* is a mother’s story. The short story-lengths contribute to the overall reading experience, providing episodic snapshots of mothers’ lives. They render the diversity and breadth of mothering practices, helping reclaim motherhood from the plethora of patriarchal how-to guides, and re-visioning maternal theory that has arbitrarily labeled mothers “good” and “bad.” In their economy of language, the stories appeal to poetic sensibilities while reflecting contemporary demands on mothers’ time—not a word is wasted. What mother has time to waste writing (or reading) unnecessary words? Lastly, these stories reveal mothers’ hearts. The specific experiences they render embrace the essence of mothering practice, what Naomi McIlwrith describes in “Sleep Little One, Sleep” as “decades of life and death, love and loss.”

One of the pervasive themes in the collection is mother blame. Anne Cameron Sadiva identifies mother blame directly in “The Lucky Ones,” but each writer confronts it tacitly in their considerations of mother/child relationships. In “What I Need is a Wife,” Marita Dachsel carefully weighs the pros and cons of sister wives in polygamous relationships, measuring her guilt for wanting female companionship and help with child rearing, against polygamy’s impact on her children. While not always blatant, mother-blame rears its head in these stories like it does in life.

Wilson’s and Davidson’s collection addresses a myriad of mothering practices creating what Kate Greenway in “Ephemera: Searchings on Adoption, Identity and Mothering” describes as “a collage of meanings, gaps, and silences.” In “Traces,” Jessica Kluthe captures the gap beautifully as a mother weeps over her still-born child while her mid-wife attempts to speak without letting her voice break. And in “Tell Me About Today,” Bobbi Junior delicately juxtaposes the silent surreality of a mother’s experience directly following her daughter’s near fatal car accident, with the immediacy of managing the chaos of caregivers, renovations, and the health care system in the following years.

While every story is worthy of mention, Nichole Quiring’s “Rush Hour” epitomizes the idea of corporate and middle-class mothering practice in the twenty first century. It brings together the corporate mother in her designer clothes, the chaos of rush hour traffic, the need to retrieve a child at the sitter, and the irrational longing to shed the mommy image—an image many of us would like to peel away if only in moments, revealing the person beneath our mothering skins. Quiring’s story puts the reader inside and outside the mother’s mind and body simultaneously. While walking naked past rush hour

traffic toward her waiting child the image of her grandmother (her maternal history) melts, and “she feels herself crumbling like bits of jackhammered asphalt.” This image is both deliberate and ambiguous, and it leaves the reader smack in the middle of contemporary mothering dilemmas, where theory meets practice.

The writing throughout this collection is careful, but not in a way to protect readers from the childhood trauma identified in P. R. Newton’s “Ethiopia Incense” or the impact of the petroleum industry on children’s health identified in Sheena Wilson’s “Petro-Mama: Mothering in a Crude World.” The sensitivities revealed are mothers’ interpretations of the world they live in, interpretations filtered through embodied practices in the day-to-day work of raising their children. It is a sensitivity born of language that knows the labour of breathing life into, and the agony of letting go. The stories in this collection are a must read for understanding mothering labour through the hearts and hands of women engaged in the day-to-day practice of creating future generations.

Stay-at-Home Mothers: Dialogues and Debates

Boyd, Elizabeth Reid and Gayle Letherby, eds.
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2014

REVIEWED BY AMANDA WATSON

Stay-at-Home Mothers is an interdisciplinary anthology that draws on a range of international perspectives about women’s experiences of mothering at home. It explores generally the question of why mothers stay at home and under what conditions, and also addresses questions of maternal subjectivity, the affect of motherhood, and the factors influencing the complicated decision (or lack thereof) to undertake mother work fulltime.

Editors Elizabeth Reid Boyd and Gayle Letherby do not aspire to a representative volume, and instead they offer a range of angles with the assertion, “it is time for the voices of Stay-at-Home Mothers to be heard” (9). The book aims to present stay-at-home mothering as a complex site of continued conflict: with losses and gains, costs and benefits. Resisting the division between stay-at-home mothers and mothers working for pay, the editors argue for recognition of the relationship between mothers at work and mothers at home in order to engage the childcare debate with an appreciation for the structural constraints affecting women’s lives.

The volume's 24 chapters are organized into four units: "The Mommy Wars," "National Perspectives," "Manifestations of Mothers at Home," and "Re-imagining Stay-at-Home Motherhood." Chapters vary in approach and genre, from empirical research on the experience of temporary foreign workers in Canada, to media studies analysis of stereotypes and the stigma of stay-at-home mothering and domesticity in the United States, to a memoir on mothering as a quest for spiritual fulfillment. Most authors articulate the momentous challenges mothers face in contemporary unsupportive, precarious conditions. Hotaling depicts "the narrow pass" of motherhood according to the "untenable paradox" of seeking balance and devotion to mothering, while others detail the "push and pull factors" (Brown, Brady, and Letherby 97) affecting stay-at-home motherhood, the disjointed earning patterns of partnered mothers joining and leaving the workforce called the "(m)ommy curve" (Boyd and Larsen 157), and the strategic manoeuvres of "chameleon mothers" who appear to be mothering at home full time while they also work for pay full time (Weatherill 173). Some authors engage media representations of the "mommy wars," (Reeber and Kaplan 55, Heffernan 129), and others present the affect of mothering at home, from "ambivalence" (Epstein-Gilboa 31, Rubin 19) to "quiet desperation" (Bautista 223), to the unique feelings of "the day after, and the day after that" (249). Others still present mothers' quest for survival in hostile conditions to unpaid care workers—from the perspective of low-income rural mothers, Jewish-Israeli mothers, young mothers in the UK, and single mothers who migrated from the Caribbean to Ottawa as temporary foreign workers—a gendered labour Villalobos characterizes as "the free gift" (295).

In the Introduction to the volume, Boyd and Letherby offer a brief review of feminist literature on the topic of stay-at-home mothers, beginning with critiques from the 1960s and 70s of women's denial of access to power, women's isolation and dissatisfaction, and radical feminist critique of women's reproduction as a site of oppression. They also cite Rich's work on the complexities of women's desire to mother and the political implications of the institution of motherhood. They move on to note several psychoanalytic contributions to understanding motherhood including Gilligan's work on psychological differences between women and men, Ruddick on women's ways of knowing, Chodorow on motherhood as "developmental" rather than natural, and Segal's critique of motherhood as biological destiny.

While this summary provides some context for the chapters to follow, it is notably missing the major contributions of racialized women. For example, Patricia Hill Collins' work on the institution of motherhood and its foundations in colonialism, racism, heterosexism, and patriarchy, is requisite context for any review of literature on stay-at-home mothering. Also, the contribu-

tions of indigenous voices, particularly around mothering “at home” in a colonial context, are necessary to nuance the work by white women, whose historical consideration of racism and colonial power and its effects on mothers and families is limited at best.

Chapters are insightful as stand-alone presentations of various women’s experiences, providing nuance for our conceptions of mothering at home—and in general—pointing to an affective form of labour that is not yet adequately theorized in feminist political work on mothers, mothering, and reproduction. This volume represents an important contribution to a number of fields of study. As a collection, it is valuable for motherhood scholars who seek to improve their perspective on the intricacies, intimacies, challenges, possibilities, and ambivalence that the care work of stay-at-home mothering and the decision (or not) to stay home involves for different women in different conditions. A number of the chapters also serve as an entry point for sociologists of care work, labour, maternal identity, and family economics who wish to formulate questions around gendered labour and women’s experiences mothering at home. For women’s and gender studies, this is a teachable volume that would serve to initiate dialogue about mothering at home, and would be particularly useful to de-stigmatize both mothering at home and mothering while working for pay outside the home.

The editors rightly frame the volume as enabling a new discussion, and as such, the book should be taken as a window into the experiences of some women mothering at home.

While the collection allows readers to appreciate what the editors call “varying mother views,” without a coherent sense of what they mean by “feminist scholarship” in the introductory chapter, it is up to the reader to assign value and interpret strategies for mothers to resist oppression. What counts as feminist scholarship is also left up to each author’s interpretation, and the resulting volume is both insightful and potentially ill-informed about or hostile to the lives of many women. For example, one chapter is decidedly against outsourcing childcare. It characterizes mothering as “the biological opportunity afforded to women,” and the “practice of creating and maintaining... a vital space of freedom and play” (Ulbrich 289-292). Conversely, other chapters refer to the “non-choice” of stay-at-home mothering in the context of low-income precarious work and prohibitively expensive childcare. A more detailed definition of feminist notions of motherhood and mother work would assist the reader in appreciating the implications of the lack of social support for mothering at home for women in the most precarious circumstances. Still, taken together, these chapters provide insight for scholars of citizenship theory and gendered labour, as they contain a host of competing messages about how women are positioned as carers and the culturally

constructed and at-times convoluted relationship between gender, sexuality, caring, and unpaid work.

Despite the editors' claim that "the global conversation has now begun," what rises is a series of presentations of women's experiences mothering at home—primarily in global north economic regions—that might represent issues for feminism, but could also serve causes antithetical to feminism. The book's concluding chapter might be its most tenuous, as it remains trapped in the rhetoric of choice it strives to criticize, while it also reproduces a gender binary as it attempts to "recognize and appreciate differences between women, as well as differences between men" (314). Though of course the collection's limitations are reasonable, certain exclusions leave its feminist orientation open to question: the intersection of globalization and exploitation of migrant labour for filling the care gap, the stigma of mothering at home for women of colour and poor women on welfare, the erasure of queer and trans folks and queer kinship structures in motherhood studies, and the unique and serious struggles of women with disabilities. The book might have better served its feminist aim if the chapters were threaded as part of an overtly political conversation about women's bodies and the work that they do. Without defining their feminist approach and international perspectives, the chapters hang as a set of "international" perspectives that are of course limited, and not grounded by critical, transnational, feminist objectives—an omission that is unfortunately too common in motherhood studies. Educators using this book would benefit from reading it alongside the critical work on motherhood from feminists like Patricia Hill Collins, Ange-Marie Hancock, bell hooks, Kim Anderson, Dorothy Roberts, Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Jen Cellio.

The M Word: Conversations About Motherhood

Ed. Kerry Clare

Fredericton: Goose Lane, 2014

REVIEWED BY LAURIE KRUK

"Word-women" is how you would describe the contributors to *The M Word*, all of them being accomplished writers whose many publications and awards signal the arrival of a new generation of Canadian authors (notwithstanding the inclusion of Michele Landsberg, renowned journalist, and her "Afterword: Grandmothering"). However, it is through embodying, resisting, or defying aspects and identities of motherhood that each woman locates her

latest inspiration. That is what makes this collection of twenty-five essays (including Patricia Storms's cartoon panel) so compulsively readable—not just as an addition to the growing “momoir” genre, but as an compilation of strong and talented voices with a diversity of experiences to draw upon.

In her Foreword, editor Kerry Clare distinguishes between the “pop culture-fuelled din” dismissed as “mommy wars,” in which “huge parts of the story” were missed, and what this project presents instead: “women’s lives as they are really lived, probing the intractable connections between motherhood and womanhood with all the necessary complexity and contradictions laid out in a glorious tangle” (10, 11, 12). Rather than simplifying the experience, these writers reveal the fissures, frustrations, failures that go with mothering—or *not* mothering, either by choice or by circumstance. As Clare insists, this book also complicates the distinction between the (presumably happy) mothers and their (presumably unhappy) childless sisters. For instance, note the shock of entering motherhood times-two with the late arrival of twins for Julie Booker: “the stress of trying to make this all work: the money, the patience, the sleep deprivation, the grandparents too old to babysit, the endless scrubbing down of poo-stained cribs, the eternal Cheerios trail behind bookcase and sofa...” (“Twin Selves” 33). Or the wry recognition of your own inevitable maternal “uncoolness” as the mother of teenagers, in “I Taught my Kids to Talk.” Speaking from the presumed “margins” as a lesbian single mom “of sorts,” Nancy Jo Cullen’s lament may strike a chord with more “mainstream” parents: “Somewhere, about the halfway point of grade seven, both of my kids experienced a seismic shift, one away from me and toward their peers... No dancing on the sidewalks, no public displays of interest in anything that might embarrass them (that’s everything, in case you’re wondering)... I should shut the eff up, for I have become TOTALLY embarrassing” (87). Darker notes are struck in Myrl Coulter’s (recent) history of being an “Unwed, Not Dead” mother in the 1960s, a sobering reminder of the belatedness of true reproductive choice. Even more tragically, the devastating death of newborns in “These Are My Children,” where Christa Couture insists on her claim to motherhood even through double maternal loss. And in Maria Meindel’s edgy “Junior,” a fibroid “false pregnancy” is used to dramatize a woman’s own refusal of motherhood after being her sick mother’s caretaker for years, with the creation of the monstrous baby-doll of her title.

Stepmothering and the creation of “blended families” are also thoughtfully explored for their distinct challenges in Saleema Nawaz’s “Bannanagrams” and Susan Olding’s “Wicked.” While some writers attack the cherished notion of maternal fulfillment as being an essentialist trap, and write pieces (like Priscilla Uppal’s “Footnote to the Poem ‘Now that All My Friends Are Having Babies: A Thirties Lament’”) to demonstrate it,

others rejoice in the way their world has expanded with the arrival of a longed-for child. Amy Lavender Harris exults, “We named our daughter Katherine Aurora because she is made of pure light. Like a star spiralling from a distant supernova, she travelled from the furthest reaches of the cosmos to belong to us and be our girl!” (132). (*Full disclosure: the writer of this review is a mother of two daughters.*) Being a mom-writer, however, not only brings new inspiration, but also new relationships to nurture and protect, as Sarah Yi-Mei Tsiang reveals in “Mommy Wrote a Book of All My Secrets,” her young daughter’s lament after listening to Tsiang read poems sparked by some of their intimate moments. Yet clearly the existence of this book reveals that nurturing the child also means nurturing the writer—ideally, a “win-win” situation. As Deanna McFadden declares, “I love my son—desperately, wholly.... I revel in him, but it’s not enough—it’s not enough, this being a mother” (“The Girl on the Subway” 158). Being *pro-creative* is no substitution for being creative on multiple fronts; the fascinating book that is *The M Word* is certainly proof of that.

Motherhood and Infertility in Ireland: Understanding the Presence of Absence

Jill Allison

Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 201.

REVIEWED BY ABIGAIL L. PALKO

The subtitle of Jill Allison’s ethnographic study of the experience of infertility in Ireland draws the reader’s attention to absence, and absence is a crucial experiential motif throughout her work. But, as she discusses, an equally definitive characteristic of infertility in the Irish context is its multiplicity of irreconcilable contradictions. Speaking of the dilemma of surplus embryos potentially created by *in vitro* fertilization, one interviewee shares, “That’s why it’s such a problem because your views are contradictory” (169). This sense of conflicting opinions and moral stances characterizes the experience of ART—and more broadly, infertility—that Jill Allison examines. In her conclusion, Allison notes, “The most important discovery for me, as a researcher, and the most complex analytical issue, has been the consistent presence of conflicted feelings, contested ideals, and ambivalence that is evident in narratives as people describe the difficult decisions they make in relation to reproduction and infertility” (182). *Motherhood and Infertility in Ireland: Understanding*

the Presence of Absence delineates these contradictions and this ambivalence through an insightful empathy and a clarity of analysis; in this study, Allison offers a crucial intervention in constructions of maternal identity.

Motherhood and Infertility in Ireland is based on interviews with forty women; ten of them participated with their partners. It is a feminist medical anthropological exploration of understandings of fertility and infertility as constructed experiences; it contextualizes discussions of these difficulties within the social and political environment in Ireland, attending to the additional influence of the Catholic Church's rhetoric and involvement in public life. Allison is sensitive to the real impact of her interviewees' experiences on their lives and relationships. She is deliberate in her acknowledgement that she is co-constructing knowledge; her theoretical formulation of the presence of absence, she explains, develops out of observations made by Elsa, one of her interviewees.

By naming the absence that is present, infertility, Allison shifts the lens through which we view Irish history and cultural attitudes toward mothering. This shift expands our understanding of who comes to call herself a mother and how; Allison identifies grief as the frame through which women make sense of the losses inflicted by infertility by allowing them to "reconfigure themselves as *having* children who did not come" (75; emphasis in the original). Such a reconfiguration expands the category of mother to include those who have attempted to conceive, even if they have not carried a pregnancy to term. This expansion of maternal identities is particularly salient in the Irish context. This is a book of great importance for Irish Studies scholars, particularly those interested in the family and its formation, as well as motherhood scholars.

Not only does Allison perceptively represent the Irish context, but she skillfully draws multiple cross-cultural comparisons. Furthermore, Ireland offers an ideal case study, as she explains, due to its codification of woman as mother in the 1937 Constitution. As such it facilitates an examination of the gender implications of the experience of infertility and the process of using assisted reproductive technologies (ART) to conceive children. For example, speaking of gamete retrieval, she notes, "For men the process is 'sexualised' and carries connotations of sexual deviance.... for women the process of egg collection is completely medicalised and devoid of sexual connotation, carrying, in addition, an attendant notion of risk and sacrifice" (109).

She deals with the ethical/moral considerations throughout, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the Catholic Church's stance and its impact in her focus on the "nuanced history of church and state relations" (123). Herein lies the only disappointment with the book: in her emphasis on the imbrication of the Church in women's reproductive decisions, she overlooks

the socio-political rhetoric shaping Irish notions of identity in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The 2004 citizenship referendum, which resulted in the passage of the 27th Amendment to the Constitution, revoked the birthright previously held by all people born on Irish soil, regardless of parental citizenship. This debate received only a brief mention in the conclusion, but greater consideration of it would have enriched earlier discussions of ART and the implications of using donor gametes.

Infertility, Allison argues, “provides a medium through which we can challenge not only the biological designation of sex and reproduction but the multiple layers of meaning that biology itself entails” (5). *Motherhood and Infertility in Ireland* succeeds in this endeavor, offering a nuanced and enriched understanding of both the impact of infertility and the ways in which women claim maternal identities.

Twice in a Blue Moon

Joyce Harries

Edmonton, AB: Spotted Cow Press, 2007.

REVIEWED BY DORSÍA SMITH SILVA

Filled with gracious candor, *Twice in a Blue Moon* by Joyce Harries replicates the stages of life in its five sections: “Beginnings,” “Middles,” “Endings,” “and Goings On,” and “Beginnings Again.” As she encourages readers to follow her journey, Harries cycles through her experiences of childhood, marriage, motherhood, widowhood, grandparenthood, and aging. Like a rare blue moon, Harries shines in her poetic voice, which is only made richer with her seventy-nine years of living.

The initial poem of the complication, “What If” begs the poignant questions, “What if we could stop time and remain at a certain age? Which age would we choose?” Harries ponders if she should “stall / at sixteen” when she “knew so little,” but thought that she “knew so much.” As she contends that her generation had to confront the aftermath of War World II, Harries openly finds that today’s youth must face the horrific atrocities of “ecological disasters / and terrorists.” This unflinchingly honesty is carried throughout the remainder of the poem as Harries confronts the deaths of her young son and husband, menopause, and pain of arthritis. Nonetheless, Harries calls herself fortunate to have surpassed these hardships—ready to “rejoice, celebrate / even blossom occasionally.”

“Beginnings,” “Middles,” and “Endings” weave Harries’ experiences as a child, wife, mother, and widower. “At the Hospital” best encapsulates Harries’ memories as she recalls the death of her mother along with their tea parties, conversations about boys, and aging legs. When she ends the poem with the tenuous loss of her mother by stating “and away she went,” Harries allows readers to witness her truth-telling with compelling tenderness. This conmingling of loss and sentiment is also effortlessly executed when Harries recalls her husband’s death from a massive heart attack in “Did He Know?” and when she describes the parting of her eldest son in “Holding Hands.”

The last two sections, “and Goings On” and “Beginnings Again,” primarily turn towards the realities of motherhood. Harries enchants with the purity of the personal and wit in “How to Leave Mothering.” She questions if a mother actually stops being a mother when she has adult children. After reaching the conclusion that mothering is a lifetime profession, Harries quips that mothers “bite their tongue” as their children age. Similarly, Harries explores her role as a mother when her son criticizes her poetic depictions of their family in “The Critic.” When her son tells her to shred her writing because she sounds “like someone she is not,” Harries courageously confronts his disapproval to conclude that her writing not only honors her roles as a wife and mother, but allows her to utilize a poetic license that welcomes her familial relationships.

By the time readers are introduced to “Today I Took My Daughter’s Weddings and Engagement Rings to a Pawn Shop,” they are keenly aware of Harries’ preserving responsibility to protect and guide her children. Instead of lamenting that her daughter’s marriage has ended, Harries wishes that her daughter had “asked years ago” about selling her rings and thinks these rings were “wrong the start / and worn too long / much too long.” Harries’ persistence in replicating frank perspectives tempered by sentiment accentuate her ability to bring readers into the various folds of her life. By creating this refreshing and welcoming process, Harries’ poems effectively bring a lively dynamism that enthralls readers.

Contributor Notes

Bruna Alvarez graduated with honors in Social Anthropology from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and in 2012 she earned an MSC. She is carrying out her PhD research on the social construction of motherhood in Spain, working on the fertility trends and the decision-making processes surrounding different types of accessing motherhood.

Maya Bhavé's PhD (Loyola University, Chicago) focused on Ethiopian immigrant women. After teaching Sociology at North Park University for ten years, she now lives in Vermont researching life/work/family balance, gender identity among female soccer players, and motherhood and child loss. She teaches as an adjunct professor at St. Michael's College and lives with her husband and two sons near Burlington.

Rita Bode is a faculty member in the Department of English Literature, Trent University. Her maternal scholarship includes published articles on the work of Melville, L.M. Montgomery and Sandra Cisneros. Her current work includes Edith Wharton's representations of motherhood on which she presented at the Fall 2014 MIRCI (Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement) conference.

Stephanie Chesser is a doctoral candidate in the Aging, Health and Well-being program through the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. Her dissertation work looks specifically at the factors that influence family planning among couples where one or both partners are enrolled in doctoral or postdoctoral training.

Amber Clark, MS, is an instructor of human resource development at Indiana State University. She teaches instructional design, teaching methods, and strategies, and the undergraduate internship course. She is the faculty advisor for the Collegiate SHRM chapter. Amber is pursuing the degree of doctor of business administration. Amber's research interests include emotional intelligence, career development, and employee engagement.

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Summer R. Cunningham, PhD, is a visiting instructor in the Department of Communication at the University of South Florida (USF). She thanks the many departmental friends and colleagues at USF who made it possible for her to do the work, both motherly and scholarly, which informs this essay.

Kit Dobson is an associate professor in the Department of English at Mount Royal University. He is the author of the monograph *Transnational Canadas: Anglo-Canadian Literature and Globalization* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2009); the editor of *Please, No More Poetry: The Poetry of derek beaulieu* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2013); and the co-editor of *Transnationalism, Activism, Art* (with Áine McGlynn; University of Toronto Press 2013).

Patty Douglas is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Guelph. Her work in mothering and disability examines educational contexts to create more liberatory pedagogies and practices. She has published nationally and internationally. Patty is a former special education teacher and lives with two sons, one of whom is autism-identified.

Talia Esnard, PhD in sociology, is an assistant professor of sociology in the Center for Education Programmes (CEP) at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Her main research interests include mothering and female entrepreneurship, gender and educational leadership, mentoring and social capital as well as teacher creativity.

Barbara A.W. Eversole, PhD, is an associate professor of human resource development at Indiana State University. She teaches a course in work-life integration and co-organizes a work-life conference every year. Dr. Eversole's research agenda includes managerial work-life allowance decisions, academic mothers, and mental disability in the workplace.

Kirsten Isgro, PhD (University of Massachusetts, 2006), is an associate professor in communication studies at the State University of New York in Plattsburgh. Her academic interests include health communication and critical cultural studies. She is the co-editor of the anthology *Mothers in Academia* (Columbia University Press, 2013) with Mari Castañeda. Additional publications include chapters in *Women and Children First: Feminism, Rhetoric and Public Policy* and *Fundamentalisms and the Media: Histories, Mediations, and Locations*. She also has articles in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, *Feminist Media Studies*, and *Journal of Homosexuality*. Kirsten lives in Burlington, Vermont, with her 9-year-old twin girls and her partner of twenty years.

Laurie Kruk teaches at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. She has published *The Voice is the Story: Conversations with Canadian Writers of Short Fiction* (Mosaic, 2003). She is also the author of three books of poetry: *Theories of the World* (Netherlandic, 1992), *Loving the Alien* (YSP, 2006) and *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories* (Demeter, 2012). Her latest work-in-progress is a collection of creative works, *Borderlands and Crossroads: Writing the Motherland*, co-edited with poet Jane Satterfield (forthcoming late 2016).

Siham Lekchiri is a PhD fellow pursuing a degree in technology management with a focus on human resource development and industrial training and development. Siham has human resource consulting experiences in various industries mainly in North and South African organizations. Being exposed to various global business opportunities, Siham's research focus is on understanding of the nature of managerial work and behaviours across nations.

Judith Lakämper is a PhD candidate in the Department of English at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, and she has an essay forthcoming in *Feminist Theory*. Her research focuses on motherhood, popular culture, psychoanalytic feminism, and affect theory.

Emily R. M. Lind is a doctoral candidate at Carleton University's Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art, and Culture. Her research examines the intersections between identity, materiality, power, and knowledge

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Virginia Little is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Sociology at Kent State University. Her research and teaching interests lie in the intersection of healthcare, gender, and the family, specifically parenthood. In her teaching, Ginny incorporates intersectionality and feminist scholarship and encourages students to be reflexive of their experiences.

Kristin Marsh, PhD, is associate professor of sociology at the University of Mary Washington, where she teaches courses in gender and work; sociological theory; social inequalities (class, race, and gender); and aging and society. She also teaches introductory courses in sociology and women's and gender studies. Her research examines the intersection of gender and aging in academe. Kristin received her PhD from Emory University in 2001 and her MA and BA degrees from Georgia State University.

BettyAnn Martin is a doctoral candidate in educational sustainability at Nipissing University, North Bay, Ontario. She is a teacher, mother, doula, and postpartum support coordinator with PSI (Postpartum Support International). Her research interests include the cultural mediation of maternal experience and identity as well as the educational and therapeutic aspects of shared personal narrative.

Naomi M. McPherson is Associate Professor Emerita of Cultural Anthropology at UBC in Kelowna, B.C. She has conducted research in West New Britain, Papua New Guinea since 1980 exploring, among other topics, women's maternal and reproductive health, their traditional birthing system and the advent of the biomedical model in this very rural area of PNG. She is co-author with Michelle Walks of *An Anthropology of Mothering* (Demeter Press, 2011) and is currently editing a collection of ten articles focused on maternal and reproductive health, entitled *Missing the Mark?: Women and the Millennium Development Goals in Africa and Oceania* (Demeter Press, 2016).

Catherine Mavriplis is an associate professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Ottawa where she specializes in computational fluid dynamics. Since 1997, she has developed programs to support the advancement of women in science and engineering, most recently through the NSERC/Pratt & Whitney Canada Chair for Women, which she holds.

Naomi Mercer is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army and an assistant pro-

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Françoise Moreau-Johnson joined the Centre for Academic Leadership at the University of Ottawa in 2007 and became its manager in 2014. In addition to a master's degree in experimental psychology (1987) and one in linguistics (2013), Françoise has more than twenty years of business experience in both the public and private sectors. She has gained the trust of professors and academic leaders who seek her guidance to bring people from various disciplines together and to build an impressive network of contacts.

Maki Motapanyane is an associate professor of women's and gender studies in the Department of Humanities at Mount Royal University. She is the editor of *Mothering in Hip-Hop Culture: Representation and Experience* (Demeter Press 2012), and co-editor (with Roksana Badruddoja) of "*New Maternalisms*": *Tales of Motherwork (Dislodging the Unthinkable)* (Demeter Press 2016).

Rachel O'Donnell is a doctoral candidate in Political Science at York University, Toronto. Her ongoing work is on feminist critiques of science, colonialism, and biotechnology. She has lived and worked in Latin America, and has previously published on Sor Juana de La Cruz, revolutionary movements, and migration.

Laurel O'Gorman is a student in the Interdisciplinary Rural and Northern Health PhD program at Laurentian University. Her dissertation is on the impact of childhood obesity discourses on single mothers who live in poverty in Northern Ontario. She also works at Laurentian University as a researcher and sessional professor.

Andrea O'Reilly, PhD, is professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at York University. O'Reilly is founder and director of *The Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* (formerly *The Association for Research on Mothering*) the first and still only international research association on motherhood with 500 paid members worldwide and, founder and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative* (formerly *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*), the first scholarly journal on motherhood with 35 bi-annual issues published. She is founder and editor of Demeter Press; established in 2006, Demeter is the first feminist press on mothering, reproduction, sexuality and family with 75

titles published. She is co-editor/editor of 19 books including most recently *This Is What a Feminist Slut Looks Like: Perspectives on the SlutWalk movement* (2015), *Mothers, Mothering and Motherhood across Cultural Differences: A Reader* (2014) and *Academic Motherhood in a Post Second Wave Context: Challenges, Strategies, Possibilities* (2012). O'Reilly is author of *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*, (2004) and *Rocking the Cradle: Thoughts on Motherhood, Feminism, and the Possibility of Empowered Mothering*, (2006). She is editor of the first encyclopedia (3 Volumes, 705 entries) on Motherhood (2010). She is a recipient of the CAUT Sarah Shorten Award for outstanding achievements in the promotion of the advancement of women in Canadian universities and colleges, is twice the recipient of York University's "Professor of the Year Award" for teaching excellence, and in 2014, was the first inductee into the Museum of Motherhood Hall of Fame.

Abigail Palko is the Associate Director of the Gender Studies Program at the University of Notre Dame. Her research focuses on twentieth-century Irish and Caribbean novelists, specifically their contestations of motherhood as institution and questionings of heteronormative sexuality. In addition to practicing feminist mothering with her partner and daughter, she is the 2013-2015 co-chair of the Feminist Mothering Caucus for NWSA.

Elizabeth R. Paré received her PhD in sociology from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her research interests and teaching courses include marriage and the family, women and work, women and higher education, sex and gender, and evaluation research. She is currently a lecturer and a monitoring and communications manager at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan.

Florence Pasche Guignard completed her PhD in the study of religions at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland). In 2012, she joined the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto to conduct her postdoctoral research project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and entitled "Natural Parenting in the Digital Age. At the Confluence of Mothering, Religion, Environmentalism, and Technology." Her research engages issues at the intersection of religion, ritual, gender, embodiment, and material culture and integrates approaches from motherhood studies and media studies.

Lorinda Peterson is a PhD student in the Cultural Studies Department at Queen's University. Her recent master's thesis combined memoir, comics, and academic writing to explore specific mothering practice at the intersection

of life experience and contemporary theory, also illustrating how metaphor and affect convey trauma memory in works of sequential art. Ms. Peterson publishes and presents her work regularly, most recently “Loving Miss JBP” in Demeter Press’s *The Mother Blame Game*, and an exhibit at The Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts in Kingston, Ontario. She is on the editorial boards for both *The Lamp*, an international graduate student journal, and Queen’s Cultural Studies *Equity and Social Justice* journal.

Susan Rotolo is a pseudonym for a PhD candidate in the social sciences who works as an adjunct professor at a liberal arts college in New York. She is currently on an extended fieldwork trip.

Dorsía Smith Silva is Associate Professor of English at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. She is the co-editor of the *Caribbean without Borders: Caribbean Literature, Language and Culture* (2008) *Critical Perspectives on Caribbean Literature and Culture* (2010), and *Feminist and Critical Perspectives on Caribbean Mothering* (2013), and editor of *Latina/Chicana Mothering* (2011). Her work has appeared in several journals, including *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, *Journal of Caribbean Literature*, and *Sargasso*. She is currently working on two book projects about mothering.

Marilyn L. Taylor was named Poet Laureate of the City of Milwaukee in 2004 and 2005, and in 2009 was appointed to a two-year term as Poet Laureate of the state of Wisconsin. She is the author of six collections of poetry, and her work has also appeared in many anthologies and journals, including *The American Scholar*, *Poetry*, *Able Muse*, *Poetry Daily*, *Measure*, *Poemeleon*, and *Mezzo Cammin*. She has been awarded First Place in contests sponsored by *The Atlanta Review*, *Passager*, *The Ledge*, *Dogwood*, and the *GSU Review*. Her second book, *Subject to Change*, was a nominee for the Poets Prize. Marilyn taught poetry and poetics for fifteen at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She also served as a Contributing Editor for *The Writer* magazine, where her widely-read “Poet to Poet” column on the craft of poetry appeared bimonthly for five years. She currently facilitates independent poetry workshops and presentations in communities throughout Wisconsin and elsewhere, including the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Division of Continuing Studies and Lawrence University’s Bjorklund Seminar Center in Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin.

Amanda Watson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Acadia University. Her research interests include intersectional theories of feminist citizenship and care work, and the affect of motherhood. She is also

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

a freelance author whose byline has appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*, *National Post*, and *Toronto Star*, among other newspapers and magazines.

Toni Schindler Zimmerman, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Colorado State University. She is the program director for the COAMFTE (Commission on Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education) accredited Marriage and Family Therapy program.



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The Australian Motherhood Initiative for
Research and Community Involvement

CALL FOR PAPERS

8th International Biennial Conference

NEGOTIATING COMPETING DEMANDS: 21ST CENTURY MOTHERHOOD

July 13th – 16th, 2016, Melbourne, Australia
RMIT University, City Campus

This conference will explore, examine, critique, theorise and respond to key issues related to how mothers negotiate competing demands in the twenty first century. The conference is grounded in feminist theory – particularly Adrienne Rich’s account of Motherhood as Patriarchal Institution and Mothering as Practice – and will explore the ways through which cultural understandings and social practices continue to impact mothers’ lives. The competing demands that mothers negotiate include but are not limited to paid work and professional pursuits, unpaid work (including care-work), creative activities, sporting commitments, online endeavours, volunteerism, religious involvement, and personal relationships. Specific attention will be paid to the current trend of outsourcing mothering to paid-carers and/ or grandparents. How women negotiate such competing demands alongside their mothering roles, and the impacts of such negotiations on a mother’s sense of self will also be explored. Submissions are welcome from, but not limited to, scholars, students, activists, community workers, bloggers, mothers, and others who research, work or are interested in this area of scholarly and social activism.

If you are interested in being considered as a presenter,
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Call for Papers

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 7.2 of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* (JMI) to be published in Fall/Winter 2016

Maternal Subjectivities: Psychology/Psychoanalysis, Literature, Culture and the Arts

We welcome submissions from scholars, students, artists, mothers and others who research in this area. Cross-cultural and comparative work is encouraged. We are open to a variety of submissions including academic papers from all disciplines and creative submissions including visual art, literature, and performance art.

Topics may include but are not restricted to:

Maternal subjectivities in intersectional, global contexts; maternal ambivalence; mothers/mothering in literature; mothers and sons/daughters; representations of the maternal; mother love; psychoanalytic theory on/of mothers; mothers and psychotherapy; counselling approaches specific to mothers; maternal mental health and wellness; psychological processes in becoming a mother; mother's panopticon, attachment to and separation from mother; developmental stages as seen by classic theorists and the constraints of those models; feminist developmental models; feminist critique of the 'psy' discourses in relation to maternal subjectivities; feminist critiques of psychoanalysis/psychology/psychotherapy; mothering as reflexive practice; matroreform, feminist counselling; the social construction of mothers; images of mothers; mother blame/mother guilt; counter-transference therapist-mother to client-mother; object relations theory; theories and theorists of maternal subjectivities (Melanie Klein, Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Nancy Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin, Joan Raphael-Leff, Daphne de Marneffe, Lisa Baraitser, Alison Stone); queering/queer maternal subjectivities; 'bad' mothering; feminist/empowered mothering; maternal subjectivities and disabilities; and maternal subjectivities in an historical context.

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Articles should be 15-18 pages (3750 words) including references.
All should be in MLA style.

Please see our style guide for complete details:
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Forthcoming



December 2015
**Screening Motherhood in
Contemporary World Cinema**
Edited by Dr. Asma Sayed



December 2015
350 pages \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-49-4

Using a variety of critical and theoretical approaches, the contributing scholars to this collection analyze culturally specific and globally held attitudes about mothers and mothering, as represented in world cinema. Examining films from a range of countries including Afghanistan, India, Iran, Eastern Europe, Canada, and the United States, the various chapters contextualize the socio-cultural realities of motherhood as they are represented on screen, and explore the maternal figure as she has been glamorized and celebrated, while simultaneously subjected to public scrutiny. Collectively, this scholarly investigation provides insights into where women's struggles converge, while also highlighting the dramatically different realities of women around the globe.

Asma Sayed, Ph.D., is a scholar of Comparative Literature and Film Studies, whose interdisciplinary research focuses on South Asian diasporas in the context of global multiculturalism, postcolonial literature and theory, and Islamicate cultures. She writes a regular film column for the journal *Awaaz: Voices*, in Kenya. She has published on gender dynamics, disability and other social justice issues in Bollywood cinema, and her work has appeared in many academic journals and anthologies. Her books include *M. G. Vassanji: Essays on His Work* (2014), *Writing Diaspora: Transnational Memories, Identities and Cultures* (2014), and *World on a Maple Leaf: A Treasure of Canadian Multicultural Folktales* (2011).

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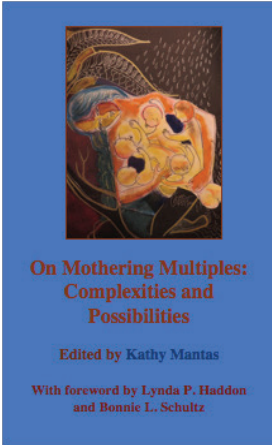
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January 2016

On Mothering Multiples: Complexities and Possibilities

Edited by Kathy Mantas



There has been an increase of twin births and higher order multiple birth babies born in Canada and around the world in the past few decades. *On Mothering Multiples: Complexities and Possibilities* seeks to (re)explore, (re)present, and make meaning of the process of conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering experiences with multiples. It features a collection of scholarly, creative non-fiction and visual essays from a wide range of disciplines and cultural perspectives. Additionally, these scholarly and more artful accounts contribute to a body of literature that, although present, is also limited, and provide insight into some of the complexities and possibilities inherent in mothering multiples.

January 2016
250 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-78-4

Kathy Mantas, educator, artist-researcher, and mother, is currently an Associate Professor of Education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. Her research interests include: life-long learning; teacher development, knowledge and identity; arts education; artful inquiry; creativity in teaching-learning contexts; holistic and wellness education; women's health issues; motherhood and mothering studies.

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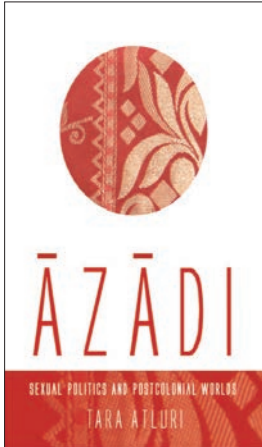
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January 2016 **Āzādī: Sexual Politics and Postcolonial Worlds**

By Tara Atluri



January 2016
250 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-99-9

In December of 2012 in Delhi, India a woman was gang raped, tortured, and inflicted with such bodily violence that she died as a result of the injuries. Her male companion was also severely beaten during the assault. The case caused massive public protests in Delhi and throughout the Indian subcontinent. These large scale public mobilizations lead to attempts to change national laws pertaining to sexual violence. One year after this case, The Supreme Court of India made the contentious decision to uphold Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. Section 377, instituted by British colonizers dates back to 1860 and criminalizes sexual activities deemed to be "unnatural," namely same sex desire and queer people. In December of 2013, massive protests also occurred throughout India regarding this decision. Both these cases received worldwide media attention and lead to public demonstrations and debates regarding sexual politics throughout Asia and globally. There was a resilient refrain heard at many of the political protests that took place: Āzādī. Āzādī is loosely translated into freedom. Drawing on interviews done in the Indian subcontinent, this book suggests that while colonial violence haunts post-colonial sexualities, anti-colonial resistance also remains, echoing in the streets like the chorus of an old song ~ Āzādī.

Tara Atluri has a PHD in Sociology. Between 2012-2014 she held the position of post-doctoral researcher with Oecumene: Citizenship After Orientalism at the Open University in the United Kingdom. She joined Oecumene as part of a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. During her time as a post-doctoral researcher, she conducted research in India regarding the 2012 Delhi gang rape protests and the 2013 protests that followed the decision by the Supreme Court of India to uphold Section 377 of the Indian penal code, criminalising diverse enactments of sexuality in the Indian subcontinent. The protests that emerged were remarkable examples of postcolonial sexual politics that inspired the writing of this book.

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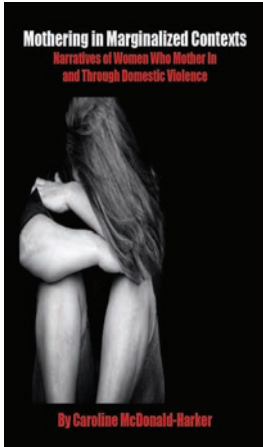
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February 2016 Mothering in Marginalized Contexts: Narratives of Women Who Mother In and Through Domestic Violence By Caroline McDonald-Harker



February 2016
300 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-011-2

This book provides a rare and in-depth examination of the narratives, experiences, and lived realities of abused mothers—a group of women who, despite being the victims, are often criticized, vilified, and stigmatized for failing to meet dominant ideologies of what a “good mother” is/should be, because they have lived and mothered in domestic abuse relationships. Based on a qualitative research study conducted with 29 abused mothers residing in abused women’s shelters in Calgary, Alberta, this book highlights the ways that these mothers experience the dominant ideology of intensive mothering, negotiate the resulting discourses of the “good” and the “bad” mother, and ultimately find ways to exercise agency, resistance, and empowerment in and through their mothering. This book discusses how abused mothers engage in empowered mothering by constructing valued, fortified, and liberating identities for themselves as mothers in the face of an ideology of intensive mothering that delegitimizes and subjugates them. These mothers are not passive victims, but rather are active agents who resist and question the idealized standards of intensive mothering as being restrictive and unachievable: who view their mothering in a positive light even though they have lived and mothered in social milieus deemed outside the boundaries of acceptable mothering; and who uphold that they are indeed worthy mothers despite their stigmatized status. Particular attention is given to the ways that intersections of gender, race, and social class shape and influence abused mothers’ constructions of their mothering identities. This book calls into question the false notion that there is only one standard, one definition, and one social location in which effective mothering is performed. It is a voice against the judgment of mothers, a call to end the oppressive and restrictive bifurcation of mothers into categories of either “good” or “bad” mothers, and an attempt to re-envision a more inclusive understanding of mothering. This book is a movement towards the empowerment of all mothers, regardless of differences in their lives and social circumstances.

Dr. Caroline McDonald-Harker is a Sociologist and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta. She received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Alberta (2011), MA in Sociology from McGill University (2002), and BA Honours in Sociology from Queen’s University (2001). Caroline is the mother of 3 young children. Her areas of expertise include: the sociology of motherhood/mothering, gender, family, domestic violence, disasters, social inequality, social policy, and qualitative research methods. She is a contributing author to *Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering* (Demeter 2015) and the co-editor of upcoming Demeter Press edited collection book *Mothering in Disasters/Mothering Disasters*. She is currently conducting a 3-year study on the impact of disasters on the family (with a focus on mothers and mothering) funded by a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant.

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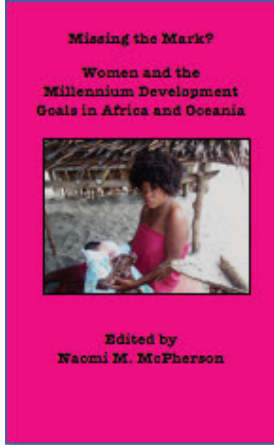
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February 2016 Missing the Mark? Women and the Millennium Development Goals in Africa and Oceania Edited by Naomi McPherson



February 2016
250 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-004-4

In the year 2000, United Nations world leaders set out eight targets, the UN Millennium Development Goals, for achieving improved standards of living at the micro level in poorer nations around the globe, by the year 2015. The papers in this collection present fine-detailed ethnographic studies of cultures in Africa and Oceania, focus primarily on MDG 3, targeted to "promote gender equality and empower women and MDG 5, targeted to "improve maternal health" to ascertain whether or not these goals have made or missed their mark.

We choose MDG 3 and 5 because these goals imply one another: in other words, gender equality and women's empowerment are necessary components for any improvement in maternal and reproductive health. Our ethnographic case studies are located in Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Ghana, Malawi, Cameroon, and South Ethiopia. Rather than present these as self-contained regional case studies, we show that women in these cultures, regardless of nation state, face the same issues or problems—lack of empowerment, gender inequities, and inadequate access to cultural or state resources—to realize good health in general and good maternal and reproductive health, in particular. As this volume went to press, the 2000-2015 MDGs closed, replaced by the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015-2030. While it could be argued that the 17 SDGs—from climate change to sustainable energy, to conservation of forests and oceans, to achieving world peace—all affect women's lives, only SDG 5, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," specifically mentions women.

Naomi McPherson is Associate Professor Emerita, Cultural Anthropology, the University of British Columbia, Kelowna. From 1980 to 2009 she has returned six times to her field site in West New Britain, Papua New Guinea to live and learn among the Bariai. She focusses on Bariai world view; life cycle ceremonies for the firstborn child and the dead; mythology, the pre- and post missionization belief system and ritual; gender concepts and gender relations; gendered violence; ethno-obstetrics, women's maternal and reproductive health. Selected publications include: *Childbirth: A Case History from West New Britain, Papua New Guinea, Oceania* 1986; *Modern Obstetrics in a Rural Setting: Women and Reproduction in Northwest New Britain, Urban Anthropology* 1994; *Women, Childbirth and Change in West New Britain, Papua New Guinea*. Ed. P. Liamputtong, 2007; *Sik AIDS: Deconstructing the Awareness Campaign in Rural West New Britain, PNG*, Eds. R. Eves and L. Butt 2008; *Myth, Women and the Female Ideal in Bariai*, Ed. S. Dunis, 2008; *Anthropology of Mothering*. Eds. M. Walks and N. McPherson, Demeter 2011; *Black and Blue: Shades of Gendered Violence in West New Britain, PNG*, Ed. C. Stewart 2012. From 2011-2015 she was Editor-in-Chief of the Canadian Anthropology Society journal, *Anthropologica*, and is currently preparing an ethnography of Bariai culture from the 1920s to present day.

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March 2016

Mothers and Food: Negotiating Foodways from Maternal Perspectives

Edited by Florence Pasche Guignard and Tanya M. Cassidy

Mothers and Food: Negotiating Foodways from Maternal Perspectives



Edited by Florence Pasche Guignard and Tanya M. Cassidy

March 2016
350 pages \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-002-0

This collection adds to scholarship on gender and food by replacing ignored or silenced maternal voices at the center of the inquiry. From multidisciplinary perspectives, this volume explores the roles mothers play in the producing, purchasing, preparing and serving of food to their own families and to their communities in a variety of contexts. By examining cultural representations of the relationships between feeding and parenting in diverse media and situations, these contributions highlight the tensions in which mothers get entangled. They show mothers' agency—or lack thereof—in negotiating the environmental, material, and economic reality of their feeding care work while upholding other ideals of taste, nutrition, health and fitness shaped by cultural norms. The diverse issues addressed in this volume include breastfeeding and infant feeding as food work, the monitoring of restrictive diets, the religious, cultural, and economic politics of food, and the gender, class and race bias in current media, as well as authoritative discourses about mothers' often "powerless responsibility" of their own and their family's health. Maternal strategies deployed to cope with some of the local consequences of global food systems, such as food insecurity arising from situations of war, climate change, and poverty, both in the economic North and in the global South, are also analyzed in the volume. The contributors to *Mothers and Food* go beyond the normative discourses of health and nutrition experts and beyond the idealistic images that are part of marketing strategies. They explore what really drives mothers to maintain or change their family's foodways, for better or for worse, paying a particular attention to how this shapes their maternal identity. Questioning the motto according to which "people are what they eat," the chapters in this volume show that mothers cannot be categorized simply by how they feed themselves and their family.

Florence Pasche Guignard completed her Ph.D. in the study of religions at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland). In 2012, she joined the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto to complete her postdoctoral research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and entitled "Natural Parenting in the Digital Age. At the Confluence of Mothering, Religion, Environmentalism, and Technology." Her interdisciplinary research engages issues at the intersection of religion, ritual, gender, embodiment, media and material culture.

Tanya M. Cassidy is a Canadian sociologist who received her doctorate from the University of Chicago. Recently she won an EU Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship housed at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) in the United Kingdom. She continues to be an Affiliated Researcher in the Department of Anthropology at the Maynooth University (Ireland), where she held her Cochrane Fellowship, as well as an adjunct Professor with the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology at the University of Windsor, Ontario (Canada).

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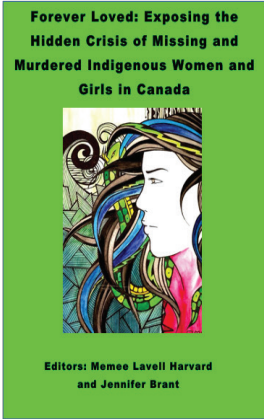
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April 2016
Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada
Editors: Memeo Lavell Harvard and Jennifer Brant



April 2016
300 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-020-4

In October 2004 Amnesty International released a report titled *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to the Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada*, in response to the appalling number of Indigenous women who are victims of racialized and sexualized violence. This report noted over 500 missing or murdered Indigenous women. Tragically, since this initial report the numbers have risen. Noting that Indigenous women are eight times more likely to die as a result of violence, the most recent RCMP report documented 1181 missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls (2013), with more distressing cases being reported every month. After conducting an extensive investigation here in Canada, in March of 2015 the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued their report condemning Canada for the ongoing failure to protect Indigenous women and girls calling it a "grave human rights violation" (UNCEDAW). Over 40 separate reports have outlined the increase in racialized and sexualized violence against Indigenous women, yet the recommendations they contain are ignored.

The failure of the federal government to respond to this issue has resulted in widespread pressure from human rights groups, grassroots movements, and community leaders. This collection supports the call for prompt response and action and urges Justin Trudeau to hold his promise to immediately launch a public inquiry.

This collection brings together the voices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, frontline workers and activists who weave together academic and personal narratives, spoken word and poetry in the spirit of demanding immediate action. Our intent is to honour our missing sisters and their families, to honour their lives and their stories.

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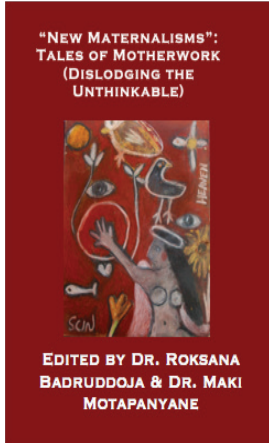
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Forthcoming



April 2016
"New Maternalisms": Tales of Motherwork
(Dislodging the Unthinkable)
Editors: Dr. Rokšana Badruddoja
& Dr. Maki Motapanyane



April 2016
350 pages \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-000-6

Much research on motherhood has been published in the past eighteen years (e.g. Tropp, 2013; Motapanyane, 2012; O'Reilly, 2011; Klein & Chernick, 2011; Kinsler, 2010; Crittenden, 2010; O'Reilly, 2007; Rothman, 2000; Collins, 2000; Ruddick, 1995), suggesting an increased interest in and visibility and acknowledgement of feminism and the topic of motherhood. The literature is concerned with the invisibility of mothers and the labour of caregiving or motherwork. Specifically, contemporary literature on motherhood is embedded in post-colonial and transnational scholarship in which motherhood scholars like Ruddick, Klein and Chernick, and O'Reilly articulate "a new economy of collective caregiving and mutual exchange" (Klein, 2012). The works also reflect the changing structure of the family (e.g. same-sex relationships and assisted reproductive technology or ART). Drawing on artist Natalie S. Loveless' curation in Spring 2012 for FAD0 in Toronto, the editors of this anthology call this shift in the representation of motherhood in the literature as "new maternalisms" (the title of Loveless' curation).

"New Maternalisms": Tales of Motherwork (Dislodging the Unthinkable) explores the perceptions of those who engage in and/or research motherwork or the labour of caregiving – i.e. mothers – and how mothers view themselves in comparison to broader normative understandings of motherwork. The selections are written by individuals from a multitude of vantage points ranging from academia to art to medicine. The authors featured here explore the meanings of mother, mothering, and motherwork within a variety of cultural and national spaces. The contributors indeed investigate the intimate boundaries of motherhood. The anthology further contributes to the research on the complex construct of maternal practice begun by such notable scholars as Andrea O'Reilly, Barbara Katz Rothman, Sara Ruddick, and Ann Crittenden, illuminating "the fissures and cracks between the ideological representation of motherhood and the lived experiences of being a mother" (Klein, 2012). This anthology is in service to this in-between space of research and theory and the lived and everyday.

The purpose of this collection lies in focusing on "new maternalisms" by exploring motherwork or the (invisible) labour of caregiving in our everyday lived experiences. Here, the anthology serves to deconstruct motherwork by highlighting and dislodging it from maternal ideology, the socially-constructed "good mom" (read as "sacrificial mom") and feminized hegemonic discourse. The objective of the edited volume, then, is to critically explore how we experience motherwork, what motherwork might mean, and how motherwork impacts and is impacted by the communities in which we live. Such an examination involves contesting dominant ways of thinking about motherwork.

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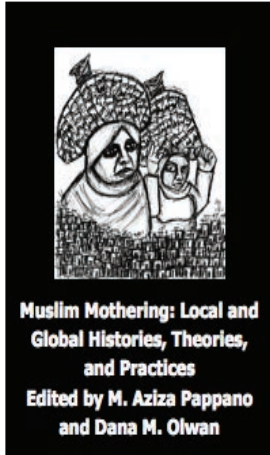
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Forthcoming



May 2016
240 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-021-1

May 2016
Muslim Mothering: Local and Global Histories, Theories, and Practices

Edited by M. Aziza Pappano and Dana M. Olwan

Muslim Mothering is an interdisciplinary volume, concentrating on the experiences of Muslim mothers, largely in the contemporary period. The volume is notable for the global range of its contributors and topics, indicative of the number of Muslim majority national contexts and large and diverse Muslim diaspora of today's world. While motherhood is highly valued in the sacred texts of Islam, the lived reality of Muslim mothers demonstrates that their lives do not often conform with traditional religious paradigms. For instance, prominent among the themes uniting these essays from diverse global contexts are the challenges facing Muslim mothers to protect and nurture their children in the context of war and militarization. With ongoing turbulence in the Middle East and subcontinent, many Muslims mothers face the difficulties of rearing children amongst frequent bombings and episodes of violence. Muslim mothers living in the diaspora face other challenges, such as the difficulty of fostering positive Muslim identity as a minority and in a context of Islamophobia. Other contributions discuss the way that Muslim mothers negotiate cultural institutions and practices, such as divorce, adoption/guardianship, post-partum confinement, and societal/religious expectations of procreation. This collection demonstrates the diverse and complex ways that Muslim mothers define and redefine the resources of Islam to negotiate better situations for themselves and their children, revealing how religious identity is a dynamic and vital force in their everyday lives.

M. Aziza Pappano is an Associate Professor of English at Queen's University. Dana M. Olwan is an Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at Syracuse University.

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Forthcoming



June 2016
Mothers and Sons
Centering Mother Knowledge
Edited by Besi Brillian Muhonja & Wanda Thomas Bernard

Mothers and Sons
Centering Mother Knowledge



Edited by
Besi Brillian Muhonja & Wanda Thomas Bernard

June 2016
350 pages \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-018-1

Conceptual and empirical studies as well as creative works tend to primarily contemplate parental interactions and influence in same sex generational dyads, resulting in a dearth of scholarship on motherhood in relation to sonhood. The philosophy that fathers raise sons and mothers raise daughters has compromised investment and progress in research in this area. This presumed gendered parental legacy not only privileges patriarchal estimations of motherhood, but also tenders universal approaches to the proper parenting of sons, erasing the diversity of mother-son experiences. This anthology, in a departure from common approaches to studying motherhood, principally privileges mother knowledge and not knowledge about mothers. The autoethnographic lens applied in the different contributions centre phenomenological mother knowledge in examining occupational, relational and emotional dimensions of mothering sons.

Mothers and Sons: Centering Mother Knowledge makes a case for the need to de-gender the framing and study of parental legacy. The actualization of an entire collection on this dyad foregrounding motherhood without particularizing the absence of fatherhood is in itself revolutionary. This assemblage of analytical, narrative and creative renderings offers cross-disciplinary conceptualizations of maternal experiences across difference and mothering sons at intersections. The authors' mother knowledge, or that of their subjects, delivers new insights into the appellations mother, son, motherhood and sonhood.

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Forthcoming



June 2016

Motherhood and Lone/Single Parenting: A 21st Century Perspective

Edited by Dr. Maki Motapanyane



June 2016
350 pages \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-001-3

The 21st century sustains one significant commonality with the decades of the preceding century. The majority of individuals parenting on their own and heading one-parent families continue to be mothers. Even so, current trends in globalization (economic, political, cultural) along with technological advancement, shifts in political, economic and social policy, contemporary demographic shifts, changing trends in the labor sector linked to global economics, and developments in legislative and judicial output, all signify the distinctiveness of the current moment with regard to family patterns and social norms. Seeking to contribute to an existing body of literature focused on single motherhood and lone parenting in the 20th century, this collection explores and illuminates a more recent landscape of 21st century debates, policies and experiences surrounding single motherhood and one-parent headed families.

Maki Motapanyane is an Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies in the Department of Humanities at Mount Royal University. Her teaching is rooted in liberatory pedagogy, focused in courses on colonialism and de-colonization, global gender issues and transnationalism, environmental justice/liberation ecology, and Hip-Hop culture. Her research spans the fields of feminist theory, motherhood and cultural studies, with academic publications featuring a range of inter-related thematic interests including feminist theory, transnational feminist research methods, mothering and motherhood, racialized comedy in Canada, and gender in Hip-Hop culture. She is the editor of *Mothering in Hip-Hop Culture: Representation and Experience* (Demeter Press, 2012), and co-editor (with Roksana Badruddoja) of *"New Maternalisms": Tales of Motherwork (Dislodging the Unthinkable)* (Demeter Press, 2016).

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Just Released



December 2015 **Doulas and Intimate Labour Boundaries, Bodies and Birth**

Edited by Angela N. Castañeda and Julie Johnson Searcy
With foreword by Robbie Davis-Floyd



December 2015
282 pages \$29.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-13-5

Scholars turn to reproduction for its ability to illuminate the practices involved with negotiating personhood for the unborn, the newborn, and the already-existing family members, community members, and the nation. The scholarship in this volume draws attention to doula work as intimate and relational while highlighting the way boundaries are created, maintained, challenged, and transformed. Intimate labour as a theoretical construct provides a way to think about the kind of care doulas offer women across the reproductive spectrum. Doulas negotiate boundaries and often blur the divisions between communities and across public and private spheres in their practice of intimate labour. This book weaves together three main threads: doulas and mothers, doulas and their community, and finally, doulas and institutions. The lived experience of doulas illustrates the interlacing relationships among all three of these threads. The essays in this collection offer a unique perspective on doulas by bringing together voices that represent the full spectrum of doula work, including the viewpoints of birth, postpartum, abortion, community based, adoption, prison, and radical doulas. We privilege this broad representation of doula experiences to emphasize the importance of a multi-vocal framing of the doula experience. As doulas move between worlds and learn to live in liminal spaces, they occupy space that allows them to generate new cultural narratives about birthing bodies.

"Doulas and Intimate Labour: Boundaries, Bodies and Birth is a comprehensive compendium of scholarly contributions from a diverse group of doulas, researchers and midwives. This book provides insight, clarification, direction, and considerations, for present and future growth of the doula model of care. This model of care has been, and will continue to be, a powerful conduit for changes in childbirth, and maternity support and care. Highly recommended for required reading in nursing courses, women's studies, doula programs, and midwifery training. An outstanding contribution to the literature!"

—Susan K. Grabia, Faculty Associate, UoW, School of Nursing, Madison, WI

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Just Released



December 2015
208 pages \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-18-0

December 2015
What's Cooking, Mom?
Narratives about Food and Family
Edited by Tanya M. Cassidy
and Florence Pasche Guignard

What's Cooking, Mom? offers original and inventive narratives, including auto-ethnographic discussions of representations, discourses and practices about and by mothers regarding food and families. These narratives discuss the multiple strategies through which mothers manage feeding themselves and others, and how these are shaped by international and regional food politics, by global and local food cultures and by their own ethical values and preference, as well as by those of the ones they feed.

"The essays in *What's Cooking, Mom?* explore the multiple ways in which gender, culture, health, and the food industry affect the work of feeding families. By highlighting the personal stories and perspectives of mothers, this collection makes important contributions to feminist mothering studies, food studies, and contemporary discussions about food and family."
—Heather Hewett, Associate Professor of English and Women's, Gender, and Sexualities Studies, The State University of New York at New Paltz

"Drawn from life, the stories collected in *What's Cooking* introduce students and general readers to just how complex, troubling and rewarding, mothers' responsibilities for feeding their families can be. This is very rich fare!"
—Donna R. Gabaccia, Professor, Department of Historical and Cultural Studies, University of Toronto

"The editors and contributors have broadened the range of stories and experiences related to provisioning our bodies; we hear from mothers who have faced and overcome challenges such as feeding a child with celiac disease, as well as mothers who do not cook. Readers will find the narratives intrinsically interesting because we all must eat, although not all of us write about the experience with the passion of these authors. The book puts the cooking, feeding mother at the centre, while avoiding the moralizing discourses so often associated with the subject of motherhood and food."
—Penny Van Esterik, Professor Emerita, Anthropology, York University, Toronto

"It's exciting to see *What's Cooking* explore in such pointed way the vibrant intersection between Motherhood Studies and Food Studies, even as it works to redress the disturbing absence of maternal voice in discussions of feeding work."
—Amber Kinser, Professor and Chair of Communication & Performance, East Tennessee State University

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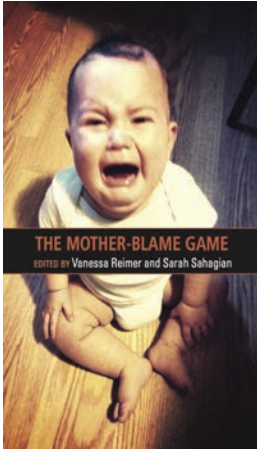
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November 2015

The Mother-Blame Game

Edited by Vanessa Reimer and Sarah Sahagian



November 2015
311 pages \$29.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-14-2

The Mother-Blame Game is an interdisciplinary and intersectional examination of the phenomenon of mother-blame in the twenty-first century. As the socioeconomic and cultural expectations of what constitutes "good motherhood" grow continually narrow and exclusionary, mothers are demonized and stigmatized—perhaps now more than ever—for all that is perceived to go "wrong" in their children's lives. This anthology brings together creative and scholarly contributions from feminist academics and activists alike to provide a dynamic study of the many varied ways in which mothers are blamed and shamed for their maternal practice. Importantly, it also considers how mothers resist these ideologies by engaging in empowered and feminist mothering practices, as well as by publicly challenging patriarchal discourses of "good motherhood."

"*The Mother-Blame Game* brings the issue of societal mother-blaming to the forefront thereby forcing recognition of its prevalence for all mothers, and particularly for mothers who are "othered" by age, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, physicality or any additional "othering" factor. What makes this book particularly powerful is that it offers critique but also possibilities for transformation, thus revealing how mother-blame can be reversed and how we as a society can work to create greater acknowledgement and value for all mothers."

—Melinda Vandenberg Giles, editor, *Mothering in the Age of Neoliberalism*

"When two women who are not mothers themselves recognize the phenomenon of mother-blame in our societies enough to edit an entire volume of essays devoted to naming and challenging the concept, then we are making progress. The many provocative essays that Vanessa Reimer and Sarah Sahagian have collected in *The Mother-Blame Game* take on the shaming of the maternal body — for being too young or too fat or too willing to breastfeed — as well as the cultural blaming of mothers, related to child-rearing methods, protectiveness of children, choices around work, and so many more issues. This volume offers an entry point into many important conversations that are waiting to be had."

—Rachel Epp Buller, author of *Reconciling Art and Mothering*

"This book offers a unique examination of mother-blaming in the twenty-first century through its interdisciplinary collection of critical discussions, intersectional research, and personal accounts. The chapters have the necessary diversity that a phenomenon as complex as mother-blaming requires. We are presented with progressive approaches to feminist theory and research that are captivating to read because of the attitude of ethnographic authenticity and critical thinking throughout. I found myself becoming increasingly engaged as I was reading it."

—Helena Vissing, M.S.

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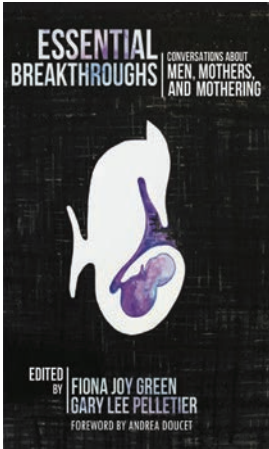
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November 2015
249 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-16-6

November 2015 Essential Breakthroughs: Conversations About Men, Mothers, and Mothering

Edited by Fiona Green and Gary Lee Pelletier.
Foreword by Andrea Doucet

Essential Breakthroughs: Conversations About Men, Mothers, and Mothering thinks from the nexus of gender, essentialism, and care. The authors creatively blend the philosophical and the personal to collectively argue that while gender is essential to our social and theoretical definitions of care, it is dangerously co-opted into naturalized discourses, which limit particular identities and negate certain forms of care. The perspectives curated in *Essential Breakthroughs* illuminate how care, as a respected and productive cultural ethic, is neither inherent nor instinctual for any human, but is learned and fostered.

The chapters are informed by feminist, queer, and trans politics, wielding post-structuralist methodologies of un-learning and deconstruction, while maintaining the maternal lens as a credible feminist analytical tool and not as a gender-essentialist practice.

"*Essential Breakthroughs* contributes to the queering of motherhood studies through examining a diverse set of phenomenological perspectives and epistemological standpoints on caregiving. Including compelling narratives and analyses from expectant fathers and male nannies to lesbian mothers and transmen making different reproductive decisions, Green and Pelletier's collection provides a rich starting place from which to think about the limitations of normative discourses around mothering. This is a vital collection for those wishing to engage a conversation about men and mothering that is simultaneously queer and feminist, that abandons gender essentialism while retaining a maternal lens as an essential tool of critical analysis."

—Shelley Park, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Central Florida; author of *Mothering Queerly*, *Queering Motherhood*

"Formal equality reigns in an increasing number of countries, and yet sexist and heterosexist parenting norms still define our families. *Essential Breakthroughs* presents a path-breaking and engaging collection of essays, theoretical and personal, that invite us to think about our families beyond the binary."

—Darren Rosenblum, Professor of Law, Pace Law School

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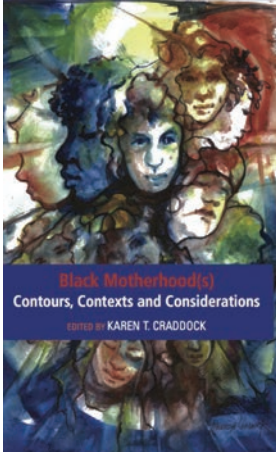
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Recently Released



October 2015 **Black Motherhood(s): Contexts, Contours and Considerations** Edited by Karen T. Craddock, Ph.D.



October 2015
230 pages \$29.95
ISBN 978-1-927335-25-3

This book considers Black Motherhood through multiple and global lenses to engage the reader in an expanded reflection and to prompt further discourse on the intersection of race and gender within the construct of motherhood among Black women. With an aim to extend traditional treatments of Black motherhood that are often centered on a subordinated and struggling perspective, these essays address some of the hegemonic reality while also exploring nuance in experiences, less explored areas of subjugation, as well as pathways of resistance and resilience in spite of it. Largely focusing within domains such as narrative, identity, spirituality and sexuality, the book deftly explores black motherhood by incorporating varied arenas for discussion including: literary analysis, expressive arts, historical fiction, the African Diaspora, reproductive health, religion and social ecology.

"What I like best about this book is the wide variety of adopted approaches to the topic of Black Motherhood. From diasporic fiction, to global mothering, to hairdressing rituals to missionary photos, the authors unpack what it means to be a black woman mothering her children under conditions of unrelenting oppression. Dr. Craddock has pulled together a fascinating multidisciplinary collection of scholars that provides a conceptual framework (the contours of black mothers' hearts, the contexts that black mothers embody and encounter, and the considerations of black mothers' minds) to assist the reader in analyzing the ideas put forward in the collection. This is not just for social scientists, not just for scholars in the humanities, not just for health care professionals. There is something in this collection for all of these different audiences.... The insight provided by this edited volume centers on how the authors are able to illustrate the many ways in which black women in the U.S., in Europe, and in Africa meet challenges across time, across situations, in intimate familiar relationships, and in public and in private spaces. That these chapters cross so many different contexts is amazing and extremely important at a time in which black women themselves are increasingly dispersed throughout the world. Of particular attention is the intellectual importance of this work. It will open up the scholarship on motherhood. No longer will black mothers be relegated to addendum status—this work will provide scholars with rich, descriptive social science research, literary criticism, visual analyses and more, which has the potential to round out our understanding of what it means to study, make sense of, and truly contextualize motherhood today."

—Janie Victoria Ward, Ed.D., Professor, Simmons College, author of *The Skin We're In: Teaching our Teens to be Emotionally Strong, Socially Smart and Spiritually Connected*.

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Recently Released



October 2015
255 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-69-2

October 2015 **Looking for Ashley: Re-Reading What the Smith Case Reveals about the Governance of Girls, Mothers and Families in Canada**

By Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich

"*Looking for Ashley* is a richly textured and theoretically grounded analysis of what the author terms the social, juridical and biological deaths of Ashley Smith while in custody in Canada in 2007. In this compelling and challenging read, Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich conscientiously takes the reader through multiple interpretations of diverse data-including diaries, news reports and official documents-to illustrate the competing social constructions of Ashley that facilitated both her death and the official and public understandings of her death. The result is a book that encourages all of us to reconsider the power and use of such constructions in our efforts to seek or to analyze justice."

-Michelle Hughes Miller, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of South Florida

"*Looking for Ashley* is a brilliant read. It is an engaging, provocative piece built on rigorous research with an incredible depth of both primary and secondary sources. Using the Ashley Smith case as a case study, Bromwich skilfully stitches together a detailed description of the shockingly horrific treatment of Ashley Smith in the justice system with a thoughtful critique on girls, power, agency and the technologies of governance. Using the lens of discourse studies, Bromwich reveals much of what is structurally and ideologically wrong with the contemporary justice system and its treatment of girls. Bromwich's writing style is smart, engaging and brave. I had a hard time putting this book down, despite the difficulty of the topic. This is a book that will be used broadly in legal studies but also in youth cultural studies, women's studies, girls studies, critical disability studies, criminology, and sociology."

-Natalie Coulter, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies, York University

"This book provides a refreshing challenge to some common beliefs about the Ashley Smith case. The author critically analyzes the complex relationship between criminal justice and the discipline of psychiatry, as well as the processes that shaped Smith was perceived both within the prison system and in the public debates that followed her death. *Looking for Ashley* raises compelling questions concerning not only Smith's tragic story, but also more generally the prison system in Canada."

-Diana Young, Associate Professor, Carleton University Department of Law and Legal Studies

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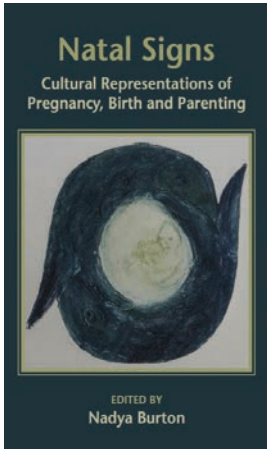
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Recently Released



September 2015
**Natal Signs: Cultural Meanings of
Pregnancy, Birth and Parenting**
Nadya Burton, (Ed)



September 2015
378 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-32-6

Natal Signs: Cultural Representations of Pregnancy, Birth and Parenting explores some of the ways in which reproductive experiences are taken up in the rich arena of cultural production. The chapters in this collection pose questions, unsettle assumptions, and generate broad imaginative spaces for thinking about representation of pregnancy, birth, and parenting. They demonstrate the ways in which practices of consuming and using representations carry within them the productive forces of creation. Bringing together an eclectic and vibrant range of perspectives, this collection offers readers the possibility to rethink and reimagine the diverse meanings and practices of representations of these significant life events. Engaging theoretical reflection and creative image making, the contributors explore a broad range of cultural signs with a focus on challenging authoritative representations in a manner that seeks to reveal rather than conceal the insistently problematic and contestable nature of image culture. *Natal Signs* gathers an exciting set of critically engaged voices to reflect on some of life's most meaningful moments in ways that affirm natality as the renewed promise of possibility.

"Through vivid, intimate prose and visceral imagery, *Natal Signs* takes standard ideas about birth and shifts them completely. This groundbreaking book is required reading for anyone interested in an expanded understanding of the multiplicity and sensuality of pregnancy, birth and parenting."

—May Friedman, Associate Professor, Social Work, Ryerson University

Nadya Burton is a sociologist and Associate Professor in the Midwifery Education Program at Ryerson University in Toronto. As a social scientist within a clinical education program, her work focuses on issues of equity, social justice and diversity in midwifery, supporting future clinicians to work skillfully across differences of identity and social location.

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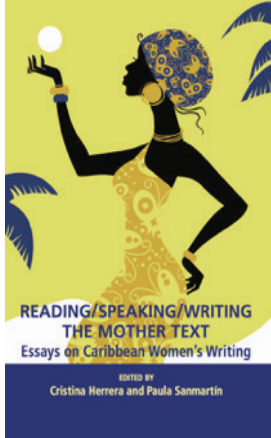
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Recently Released



August 2015 Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing Edited by Cristina Herrera and Paula Sanmartin



August 2015
256 pages \$29.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-70-8

While scholarship on Caribbean women's literature has grown into an established discipline, there are not many studies explicitly connected to the maternal subject matter, and among them only a few book-length texts have focalized motherhood and maternity in writings by Caribbean women. *Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text: Essays on Caribbean Women's Writing* encourages a crucial dialogue surrounding the state of motherhood scholarship within the Caribbean literary landscape, to call for attention on a theme that, although highly visible, remains understudied by academics. While this collection presents a similar comparative and diasporic approach to other book-length studies on Caribbean women's writing, it deals with the complexity of including a wider geographical, linguistic, ethnic and generic diversity, while exposing the myriad ways in which Caribbean women authors shape and construct their texts to theorize motherhood, mothering, maternity, and mother-daughter relationships.

"We expected it because we needed it and, finally, it is here—an engaging book on the poetics of motherhood and maternity in Caribbean women's writing that gives mothers in Caribbean culture not only the voice they have been denied, but also fuller-clearer reflections in the mirror of Caribbean culture. The absence of both voice and visibility birthed the poetics which the book explores with brilliance. A must-read, the book inspires a second-read and will give birth to new books. That the book is finally here is cause for celebration."

—Gloria Wade Gayles, Founding Director, The SIS Oral History Project and RESONANCE in LEADS, The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement

"*Reading/Speaking/Writing the Mother Text* provides an important intervention in Caribbean women's literary scholarship by focusing on maternal writings from the region. The diversity of authors, nations, cultures, and linguistic groups covered is an asset that makes this work useful for scholars and in the classroom. This book begins an overdue conversation about how representations of motherhood and family in literary works by Caribbean women connect issues of history, race, memory, nation, and violence."

—Jocelyn Fenton Stitt, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, University of Michigan

"Insightful and thoughtful, this collection fills the maternal void left by recent studies in Caribbean women's writing. It not only addresses major concerns in feminist maternal scholarship by affording a critical textual discussion of different themes and literary genres but also enriches our understanding of diversity in the Caribbean context by adding more discussions in light of a wider spectrum of languages, cultures and racial differences, which none of the previous works is able to offer."

—Yilin Yu, author of *Mother, She Wrote*, Associate Professor, National Ilan University, Taiwan

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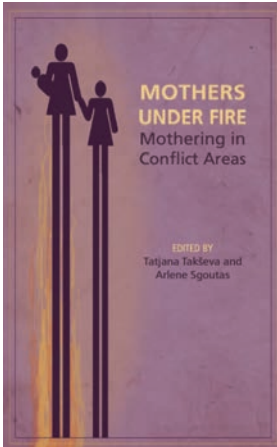
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Recently Released



July 2015 **Mothers Under Fire: Mothering in Conflict Areas**

Edited by Tatjana Takševa and Arlene Sgoutas



July 2015
384 pages \$34.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-17-3

Mothers Under Fire: Mothering in Conflict Areas examines the experiences of women mothering in conflict areas. The aim of this collection is to engage with the nature and meaning of motherhood and mothering during times of war and/or in zones experiencing the threat of war. The essays in the collection reflect diverse disciplinary perspectives through which scholars and field practitioners reveal how conflict shapes mothering practices. One of the unique contributions of the collection is that it highlights not only the particular difficulties mothers face in various geographic locations where conflict has been prevalent, but also the ways in which mothers display agency to challenge and negotiate the circumstances that oppress them. The collection raises awareness of the needs of women and children in areas affected by military and/or political violence worldwide, and provides a basis for developing multiple policy frameworks aimed at improving existing systems of support in local contexts.

Mothers Under Fire: Mothering in Conflict Areas is an excellent and welcome contribution to the study of gender and conflict, and in particular the impact of conflict on mothers and mothering. Through different disciplinary perspectives, first person interviews, and historical and contemporary cases across geographic regions, this book convincingly demonstrates how mothers have agency in times of conflict and post-conflict.

—Kristen P. Williams, Clark University

Mothers Under Fire takes a new and refreshing look at the various ways the maternal can and does serve as a resource for peacebuilding. The range of articles is broad and nuanced, offering an important imaginative resource for practitioners as well as scholars.

—Susan St Ville, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame

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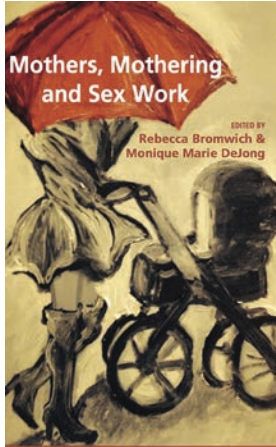
Recently Released



July 2015

Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work

Edited by Rebecca Bromwich and
Monique Marie DeJong



July 2015
294 pages \$29.95
ISBN 978-1-926452-12-8

Exploring the shared intersections of mothering, motherhood and sex work, *Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work* weaves together a range of voices from academic and sex-worker communities around the world. It features interdisciplinary contributions, scholarly essays, academic research, artwork, poetry, photography and experiential narratives. Notable among these are two modern masterpieces from literary legends: "Voices," a short story by Alice Munro and excerpts from Maya Angelou's autobiography *Gather Together in my Name*. In the spirit of the adage "nothing about us without us," *Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work* brings together unique and controversial viewpoints defying conventional wisdom to provide fresh insights into sex workers and their rights. Beginning with the political, legal and social context of sexuality and gender in Canada, the book's focus widens to explore issues affecting sex workers worldwide.

"*Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work* is a much-needed intervention that illuminates the intersectional challenges facing mothers involved in sex work, and their children, extended families and communities. Taking a transdisciplinary approach, the creative-critical anthology engages with the resistance, resilience, joy and humour that sex-working mothers demonstrate in the face of stigma, oppression and sex work-phobic maternal discourses."

—Ummni Khan, Associate Professor, Carleton University

"This path-breaking anthology challenges readers and scholars to re-think their notions of mother work and sex work. Sex work is more than sex, and mothering is much more than an 'occupational hazard' of sex work. Whether they've borne children or not, the contributors reveal the many ways that women on society's margins are governed through shame, stigma, economic precarity, welfare discipline, and carceral regimes. *Mothers, Mothering and Sex Work* draws out, in multidisciplinary fashion, the consanguinities of gendered labor under racialized patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism. This is required reading that demands attention."

—Melinda (Mindy) Chateauvert, Author of *Sex Workers Unite! A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk*

"This book will undoubtedly be a great resource for current and former sex workers who need to see themselves represented somewhere in the culture they live in, as well as for sensitive outsiders who would like to gain more reliable information about sex work than any mainstream television documentary or magazine article is likely to provide. A short review can't do justice to this book. you'll simply have to read it your- self."

—Jean Hillbold, Instructor, Department of English, University of Regina

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