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Bitter Milking Art Education? (Re)orienting, (Re)deeming, (Re)claiming, (Re)presenting M(other)work in Art Education

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Bitter Milking Art Education?

(Re)orienting, (Re)deeming, (Re)claiming, (Re)presenting M(other)work in Art Education

Anniina Suominen Guyas, Linda Hoepfner Poling, and Kathleen Keys

MY MILK IS BITTER

REVIEWING the existing literature of women and/or mothers in academic roles paints a pretty grim picture. Even worse is the prediction for success that shies far from optimistic. Some inequities in higher education need to be considered: “women lag behind their male counterparts in tenure status, promotion to full professor, and salary. Overall, considering all full-time faculty at all types of institutions, women earn about 80 percent of what men earn” (“Inequities Persist,” 2005, p. 1). The adherence to Family Medical Leave Act provisions or other familial and maternal related leave are inconsistent across academia and, even in their most generous of states, are still inadequate. Inequity in higher education is not an insignificant issue; the intellectual, institutional, and cultural practices and structures inhibit women from committing to their graduate studies and succeeding in their academic careers (Evans & Grant, 2008; Hile Basset, 2005; Lynch, 2008; Mason & Ekman, 2007; Mason & Goulden, 2002; O’Brien, 2007; Pillay, 2009; Sorcinelli, 1992; Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). When engaging women in higher education in a conversation about their academic paths, achievement, and difficulties, gender-based biases are frequently brought up as constant inequities.

Experiencing some of these adversities (particularly bias based on parental and gender roles and responsibilities, unreasonable scheduling of courses, and/or delayed promotion), we began our collaboration—to create scholarship written from the perspective of mothers—by talking about life/lives as mothers in academic roles, which in the past has been a “predominantly silent experience” and one “largely unvoiced at work” (Leonard & Malina, 1994, p. 30). We shared the challenges of balancing one’s life, renegotiating supportive partnerships at homes and (with)in workplaces, talked about student and colleague reactions to our pregnant bodies, and our babies who accompanied us to the places of “work.” We were looking for comfort and solidarity; beyond this, we were looking to work toward legitimizing collaborative and holistic notions and presentations of scholarship,

while also looking for ways to change the everyday working conditions for academic parents by naming and voicing them.

Soon after, we began our co-writing by looking for intersections and connections between the seemingly separated and isolated parts of our lives: scholarship and motherhood. Moving beyond the quest to find comfort, solidarity, and connections, we believe it is time for women and mother scholars to stop hanging out in lobbies, whispering in bathrooms behind closed doors, venting in e-mails, and/or saving the world during an afternoon beer before picking up the kids. Struggles faced by female and mother scholars are still a largely silenced experience, and the adversity is shared among few trusted colleagues for fear of being labeled as less capable and non-committed scholars. It is time to acknowledge that women's scholarship is not accomplished while the kids nap; women should not settle for part-time adjunct-professor gigs; that daycare on campus is not a solution to inequities; and working towards accommodations and mere toleration does not change the notions of intellectuality and scholarship. Instead, women-produced work that is written from or within the perspective of mothers/scholars¹ is moving to inspire changes in attitudes, perceptions, policy, practice, theory, and praxis (see Keifer-Boyd & Smith, 2006–2010).

In this chapter, we first define m(otter)work and our goals for writing this text, as these have defined the structure and visual/narrative strategy we call m(otter)work. The remainder of the chapter is composed of our personal narratives addressing the key concepts of (re)orienting, (re)deeming, (re)claiming, and (re)presenting scholarship based on praxis from the perspective of mother/scholars. Presenting our visual narrative strategies, we name the conditions in which we faced adversity and how we responded to the adversity in search of coping, survival, empowerment, and change.

NARRATIVES OF M(OTHER)WORK

We conceptualize m(otter)work as the synergistic and interdependent notions of mothering, education, scholarship, and artistic practice. M(otter)work in itself is resistance to adversity; it is a reclaiming and making visible the struggles and accomplishments of balancing competing roles. It entails knowing, sharing, presenting, and positioning this knowledge from the holistic and inclusive perspective of mother/scholar. Tension from the competing roles of mother/scholars and expectations is overcome; we practice reorienting, redeeming, reclaiming, and representing our m(otter)work through our narratives. Our narratives serve as vehicles, in part, for overcoming adversity.

In this chapter, we (the authors) complement, counter, and reinforce one another in exploring and conceptualizing our mother/scholar identities as living and evolving entities, rooted in awarenesses manifested in both received and subjective voices.² Working together to revision how the received and subjective can coincide is a critical task in informing the field of art education. This chapter is our effort to contribute to the under-studied topic of combining motherhood and scholarship.

Each of our narratives interplay with art images, as they become the connections and anchors between abstract constructs of theory and that of concrete reality. Through our narratives of exploration, we share who we are, what it means to be us, and what we do *as mother/scholars*. We aim to portray scholarship and teaching in ways that do not exclude love, care, thinking and feeling bodies, and/or emotions. Christ (1986) asserts that “the simple act of telling a woman’s story from a woman’s point of view is a revolutionary act” (p. 16). The stories we tell indisputably serve as

vehicles for meaning in our lives. We live and lead storied lives. Stories help us make sense of how we experience the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). By writing from the perspective of m(other)work, we are looking to make sense of our experiences, and by narrating these experiences, we give voice to the experienced suppression and invisibility.

Anniina's act to consciously and subconsciously perform competing/intersecting roles of mother/scholar, and the quest to find meaning in her life, is done through photographic presentations and their narrative/conceptual analyses. Linda redeems a form of praxis inspired by the blend of mother/scholar roles, informed by the notion of care. Empowerment is formed in overcoming the urge to remain distant, academic, and scholarly; instead, writing and practicing from a holistic perspective is a form of standing up to adversity. Kathleen practices transgressive m(other)work, focusing in part on how the pregnant body is perceived, as well as how mothers/parents are represented in art, academia, and visual culture. All three of us work toward greater understanding, and advocate for changes in perceptions and practices.

We take risks in revealing how we face adversity in negotiating personal and professional roles. Thus, it is important that our individual voices and styles remain intact, even at the risk of being read as too disjunctive and inconsistent. In a sense, we are not looking to find solace and shelter in unity and solidarity, but to present our vastly different experiences in the hope that each reader will find an entry point to the topics discussed by being able to relate to our stories. Power to stand up is thus found in the diversity of experiences and voices. In this approach, we refer to similar work done by Evans and Grant (2008); the collection of essays in *Mama, PhD* anthology does not form a unified and shared vision, but presents individual experiences respecting diverse viewpoints.

The fact remains that women's position in higher education is characterized by adversity and by circumstances different from those of men; women and men alike are hurt by this difference in assumed roles. The inflexible structure of the academic enterprise is hurting the career predictions of all academics with families, and we need to construct, present, and hear these stories in order to elicit change.

RE/ORIENTATION OF SELF: ANNIINA

In this section, I explore my relationship with my photographs, which I perceive as sources of knowledge, surfaces (physical, performed, and imagined) of reflection and reflexivity. I perceive artistic work as part of my scholarship, and vice versa. I hope to create a portrait of a practice that entails merging, fusing, and relational reading of all aspects of my work as they relate to my art and "private life" as a mother. In, with, and through my photographic work, I explore notions of learning, understanding, and being. I narrate the photographs through vignettes of my life as a mother/scholar. Doing so enables me to work toward m(other)work, a holistic notion of self that encompasses mothering, education, scholarship, and artistic practice.

Much of my artistic work has focused on water as the evident or describable subject matter. Photographs of water guide my thinking, and I use them repeatedly to help me process all matters of life, including motherhood and education. The artistic process of capturing is often initiated by a visual stimulus or interruption: a reaction that distracts me from other engagements. I hardly ever photograph when I am alone. (Let's face it; I hardly ever do *anything* alone since I became a mother). I photograph water during family walks, trips to the beach, trips to the zoo or state parks,

or I capture the surfaces of our swimming pool as the family awakes and gets ready for the day. The intense relationships that I have with my photographs are embedded in the cherished memories of family adventures and shared moments of exploration and discovery. On the other hand, they are taken with the intention of understanding the connections and disjunctions between the various roles I perform.

Inherent in my artistic work and scholarship is how I perceive the rhizomatic relationship between my work as an educator and my life as a mother. I find liquid possibilities in the presence and absence of subject matter and presentation in these photos—literal, emotional, and conceptual reflections of self, as well as relational self-reflexivity. In this performance of photographic presentations, I am a combination of all the roles and perspectives, but I am not limited to or solely defined by them. In my m(other)work, I assume and hope for curriculum in the making that echoes the holistic awareness inherent in artistic knowledge.

I am a fourth-generation artist/educator. The way my mother performed motherhood was always also a performance of an educator who was initially a student, then an art teacher, an educator in higher education, and eventually my research partner. These roles of mother and educator were inseparable; they leaked into one another in practice and philosophy. I will carry this legacy to my daughters as I will not be able to, nor will I desire to, mother them without simultaneously being an educator. At age 2, my oldest daughter began to consciously mimic her teachers, blending in these performances her favorite teachers, my mother, and myself. Signature to her play was to clean, to make calls to her doll's mother concerning the care of this doll, and to teach herself and her baby sister appropriate behavior. Remarkably, as I struggled to keep the house organized and to attend to my children and work, both my daughters began wiping and cleaning as a form of play at about 12 months of age. It is ironic how small acts embody the legacy of gender roles we carry.

As a critical scholar, I wonder if wiping is really what I do as an educator and a mother. Perhaps wiping, cleaning up messes, and purifying with wet cloths best signify me as a mother and also



Figure 1. *Reflection*. Photograph courtesy of Anniina Suominen Guyas, © 2010.

characterize my curriculum. What follows is an instance rooted in critical self-reflection—a teaching encounter that caused me to reflect on the ethics of education, as I realized I was basing my performance on socially learned gender roles, mostly of a mother.

Dirt, Dirty Practice:

Cannot wash away disgrace and untrue compromise. No soap will remove the dampened smell I associate with wet laundry left in the machine.

...

I sat there and tried to survive by finding a pleasing compromise.

I sat there and sucked myself into thinking that I would learn from this encounter, that assigning to and admitting guilt, by publicly admitting to self-blame, would help settle the matter.

What did I do?

I slipped—and expressed what I thought was wrong about the student's work. I asked questions and didn't "sandwich" what I wanted to say, positive, negative, positive.

Mistake... I will hear about it... We will all hear about it.

Words worse than a slap on the hand: shame crawls close and cuddles.

Shameful words of disgrace repeated in the name of education: self-disgust shivers my skin.

...

I sit there again seeking resolution. Words of honesty and open-communication abused and ridiculed during the performance of gendered m/othering. No curriculum touches these moments of stripping oneself from all beautiful for the sake of gendered obedience. Spit, lies, "well-intended" advice, I take it all as I perform the age-old satire of a caring mother.

And it works.

A weekend followed the incident I described here. To bounce back from a difficult week at work, I tried to distance myself from these events by fully emerging myself in family life. Only partially succeeding, my husband and I collaborated in creating an illusion of steady happiness—only to have it burst on Saturday morning as he began to contemplate reasons for the less-than-ideal tidiness of our kitchen. I "lost it" and threw a bowl. As it loudly bounced around the kitchen floor, my daughter yelled "Stop it, stop it!" Instant guilt and feeling of failure washed over my body (Sutherland, 2008). I wanted to scream and beg for the world to stop, but I realized that no scream would make the world pause so that I could regain my composure and emerge out of my self-centered cry for help. Five hours of interrupted sleep per night continued to put stress on my body. The balance of temporary hostility and insecurity at work, teething, sick children at home, and family far away in and out of the hospital had pushed me to a desperate struggle for a stress-free break. It was then that I began to compose this text and contemplate the meaning of education, teaching, institutionalism, and gendered care.

After drafting my thoughts and sources, I turned to Kumashiro's (2004) *Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning toward Social Justice*, to read about educational crisis, and I began to work through the adversities. It is in m(other)work—the constant reflection and becoming, this mode of almost-understanding the potential of motherhood that teaches us about the suggestive presence embodying the dimensions of knowledge of being in educational spaces/experiences—that the aim at change toward greater balance that can potentially be achieved through the roles of mother and educator.

Like the water I photograph, the m(other)work I perform constantly and systematically evolves in the reorientation of knowing, practicing, and being with others that only temporarily becomes (re)claimed, (re)deemed, and (re)presented in this m(other)work. The photographs manifest and embody the constant and intended state of flux, and thus my approach to m(other)work differs from Linda and Kathleen. Their intentions, as presented in the subsequent narratives, present a more steadily defined perspective and focus on claiming one's beliefs in practice or actively changing representation and perceptions of others.

(RE)CLAIMING & (RE)DEEMING M(OTHER)WORK: LINDA

In this section, I attempt to reclaim care in education and redeem m(other)work that includes simultaneous practice of care, accessibility, sensitivity, and availability as aspects of education that are often disassociated with intellectualism and scholarship. I draw from the notions of motherhood and academic work to redeem a form of praxis inspired by their blending, integration, and potentiality. Women who are mothers and educators tread in intellectual work that, until recently, has been considered the domain of masculinity and masculine thinking. Mothering, on the other hand, is “traditionally associated with nurturing, loving, emotion and sensitivity” (Pillay, 2009, p. 502). As a mother and a scholar, a woman participates in the institutions and practices built upon this duality, performing roles frequently in opposition, defined by separation and distinction (Edwards, 1993; Lynch, 2008; Young & Wright, 2001). Unraveling the complexity and ambivalence about mothering and education is a task wrought with intensity. The interwoven (and often competing) positions of mother and scholar are simultaneously empowering and disempowering, creating tension and ambivalence (Raddon, 2002).

A challenge exists to reclaim and unite the disparate roles:

In practice for as long as the academic mother lives out her academic life as academic and as mother she will give credibility to the apparent difference between these two lives. The challenge is to find the excluded middle, to harness it for her benefit, to neither sublimate nor subdue the experiential difference between academic and mother, but to find its nuances and tenors that serve her well. (Pillay, 2009, pp. 508–509)

M(other)work in part entails reconsidering thinking, intellectualism, scholarship, and pedagogy in ways that encompass and holistically integrate ways of being and performing through and within care.

I cherish my identity as a mother. It is not the whole of who I am, but it is an essential part of everything I am. I aim at finding holistic practices and understandings, and still I find myself dealing with duality, opposing expectations, and at the heart of continued tension and conflict. At times, being a mother drains all of my energy, leaving other roles and expressions of my self unfulfilled.

This is at odds with the feelings of guilt caused by attending to my needs and desires as an educator sucking the time from my children. Looking for materializations of holistic practice versus tensions and dualism, my office has taken on a space of knowing what I am and do as an art educator, as someone who struggles to reclaim often negatively viewed personas of a “caring teacher.” What does a “caring teacher” look like? Only partially aware of this, I have worked on the answer for years as I have inhabited my office.



Figure 2. Office. Photograph courtesy of Linda Hoepfner Poling, © 2010.

My office. A space of complex roles; the roles of caring and teaching become enmeshed, more integrated than in any other space at work. Releasing levels of formality that more readily erode, the space that tacitly welcomes with unspoken permission to share what needs to be shared; insecurities in teacher identity revealed, to be revived, and often to be healed.

Integrated care-teaching becomes real in this space, my office, this space that gives evidence of permission to enter and be uncensored.

What is it about my office that elicits so much raw honesty from students? So much questioning? So much revelation of struggles (and joys)? Office hours become distinct from teaching hours; the exchange of attention one for the other becomes further affirmation that care has a solid foundation and an integrative role in my identity as a feminist educator.

My office is an embodiment of integrated and merging caring roles. As students enter this space, I assume they feel invited to share the personal, blended with their professional selves of being students and, without asking, reveal themselves in the process of sense-making of their art-educator selves. In this process, my role is to attentively listen and, based on their cues, react and advise them, responding to their needs. My office door, more often than not, is literally and metaphorically

open; a known space that ensures my availability and attentiveness. The cognitive and emotional is considered; the social and scholarly not ignored. Understanding this work, the caring attentiveness in mothering and teaching relative to gendered practice and positionings, is what I find worthy of redeeming in the context of (art) education (Francl-Donnay 2005; Gerber 2005; Grumet, 1998; Hile Basset, 2005).

My office is a place where I intensively listen to my adult students' concerns; the blend of mother-caring is inseparable from the educator-caring I practice. Drawing parallels between mothering and teaching, O'Brien (2007) highlights intensive and extensive listening as the hallmark of care work, addressing questions and concerns, unvoiced angst, ensuring availability, and communicating support. Does this not describe what educators do on many levels? O'Brien asserts: "The issue of care, particularly emotional care, and the efforts it involves, has the power to challenge how we think about ourselves as interrelated beings, and how we wish to move forward in the field of education to create a more human and equal society for all" (p. 174).

Two years ago, a student close to graduation from the art education program committed suicide. Finding reason within this tragedy was futile in itself; what became an opportunity in the finding was the way in which students and professors cared for one another during the emotionally raw times. He was a well-loved student. Few were aware of his intense personal struggles, and as the guilt consumed many of us in the inability to foresee the tragedy of this young person's death, we practiced care as a community, rallying around one another with expressions of care abundant.

*This was one of the easiest times to express care without feelings of ambivalence. How could I **not** be there for emotional support for my students? The question was not even an issue. The issue became why this visibility of care cannot be made concrete, tangible, and acceptable in other contexts of my teaching. A student's death became an entry point into reclaiming the importance of my caring side as a teacher. Care seemed natural, acceptable, and not secondary to my teacher identity. Balance was achieved in this intense instance of caring. I found sense and unity in the holistic practice that emerged. There was no need to censor or subdue caring and it became part of my pedagogy.*

Overcoming the systematic and tacit expectation to separate motherhood and work came in the form of resistance—resistance to hide the care work. Overcoming adversity, for me, was standing up to and facing the culture of duality surrounding parenthood and academia, and symbolically removing the itchy blanket that shrouded the potential of meaningful integration of mother/scholar identity in the form of centralizing and verbalizing care work, practicing m(other)work.

(RE)PRESENTING M(OTHER)WORK: KATHLEEN

Mothering in while professing in higher education is often a silent experience; however, Leonard and Malina (1994) posit that mixing mothering and academic work is a transgressive activity. In recent years, I have actively un-silenced my presence, identity, and performance as a mother. At first, this work was purely personal. Later, it became communal and activist in nature, as I began working with my coauthors and others on this topic.

My trajectory of transgressive m(other)work started in late 2007, with a fervent interest in visually exploring, interrogating, and analyzing what I repeatedly heard and deemed *Terrible Things to Say...* to a pregnant woman (me) through artwork, just prior to the birth of my son. Included in

a faculty exhibition, my work was a collection of visual and written responses to the unsolicited comments received during my pregnancy. These m(other)work examples blended my mother/scholar identities, and took a stand against gender discrimination in society in general and within higher education in particular. Later, I co-curated a group exhibition addressing diverse representations of motherhood/parenthood in visual culture.



Figure 3. Selections from *Terrible Things to Say...* Courtesy of Kathleen Keys, © 2010.

With the *Terrible Thing to Say...* series, I aimed to question and alter the way that faculty mothers (and pregnant bodies/mothers) were read, perceived, and interpreted. M(other) scholars have noted false yet persisting beliefs about mothering lessening a faculty members' performance (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007). These real-life, glaringly assumptive, discriminatory interpretations and gazes settling on my pregnant body and the perceived disconnect of my intellectual capabilities as a mothering professor were startling to me. In response to this discrimination, and by blending my mother/scholar identities, I stood up to interrogate the perceived and implied distrust and questioning of the performance of my pregnancy.

By including my series in the faculty exhibition, I enacted a pedagogy of social justice awareness, empowerment, and voicing centering on my experiences, and potentially resonating with those of other mothers. Serving as a site of contestation, its inclusion also performed a pedagogy of critical resistance, drawing attention to personal and greater political implications of misogyny and gender discrimination.

Believing in art as a catalyst for social change and in an exhibition as a nexus for community interaction, I recently co-curated a group exhibition inspired by m(other)work with my art-history

colleague Janice Neri entitled *Visible M(Others): Images of Parenting in Visual Culture* at Boise State University. We sought to identify and encourage the development of artworks that instigated thinking about how alternative and diverse parenting models are positioned or located in relation to the visible/invisible landscape of maternal/paternal visual culture. The 19 selected and invited artists presented diverse perspectives and models through this (re)presentation.

Additionally, our curatorial m(other)work harnessed the experiential learning possibilities accessible in an exhibition development project. Graduate and undergraduate students participated by undertaking research to develop catalog essays (Keys & Neri, 2010). They interviewed artists and investigated their own experiences and/or biases toward motherhood/parenthood. These art students were significantly impacted by access to primary sources of contemporary artworks and by the artists who created them, and became part of our activist collaboration.



Figure 4. Selections from *Visible M(Others): Images of Parenting in Visual Culture*. Courtesy of the artists and Kathleen Keys, © 2010. Clockwise from left, then to center toward back right: Benjamin & Alma Love, *Alma's Castle*, 2010 wood, latex paint; Terra Feast, *Where's the mommy?* accordion book with hand-colored illustrations, 2010; Dan Scott, *Two Unexpected Miracles with Hulk Smash Gloves*, mixed media, 2010; Margo Proksa, *Woman's Work*, soil collection and found objects, 2000; Elizabeth Sloan, *Our M(Others), Ourselves*, mixed media: altered book, 2010; Grant Olsen, *Orphan Imprint #1: Piglet and Dog*, wool and wool blends, 2010; Jill Lawley, *The Levels*, ceramic and glaze, 2010; Amy Pence-Brown & Shannon Paterson, *Mommybloggers*, computer and desk installation, 2010; Jill Fitterer, *To Dementia*, accordion book with letterpress and intaglio, 1999; and Brooke Burton & Ted Apel, *Influence*, mixed media, 2010.

It is just a day before the exhibition reception and I am exhausted from the organization and installation—and pause to finally reflect by myself in the gallery. Taking it all in, I am looking and listening to the artworks commune with one another and literally sinking down into the space. Sitting on the floor I think about what Janice and I, and the students and artists, have created, and look forward to seeing how the viewers will add to this activist space.

I do not want to leave.

The layers of curatorial collaboration and resonant content create an inviting, warm, and intriguing space where I not only feel at home, I am home. Looking around, I wrestle with an overwhelming desire to literally inhabit the space.

Can I live here? (Or at least metaphorically stay here in my work and life?)

This is similar to my experiences with fabulous recurring dreams of living in the art museum where I worked early in my career. But now much stronger feelings emerge. This is a result of the blendings, meanings, and resonations I see in front of me resulting from our m(other)work practice. Maybe I can live here?

Maybe I can live here?

Everything I need is here.

A castle to sleep in, a desk for work, a cabinet of curiosities to treasure and ponder, hand made books to read and admire, art, and a blanket to keep me warm. The culmination of this project has caused a blending of my dualistic selves of mother and academic, and made a temporal home for them. I long to stay, inhabit, and to take up residence in this resonant learning space.

Maybe next time, I can stay a bit longer.

What began as a very personal issue in the *Terrible Things to Say...* evolved later into a collaborative manifestation in the *Visible M(others)* project that developed community, fostered dialogue among and across viewers and artists, and took steps toward seeding the beginnings of a coalition. Members of this initial coalition were similar in desires, adamancy, and commitment to making diverse mothering/parenting models more visible. It became clear that those involved were hoping that future actions, such as community education and service relating to consequent exhibitions, might lead not only to tolerance, but also acceptance of these issues and become part of a larger cultural lived experience.

The *Terrible Things to Say...* series and the *Visible M(Others)* exhibition (re)presented quieted, marginalized, and/or ignored contexts of motherhood and parenting; they resisted, spoke out, and stood up against the status quo. The exhibitions are reactions to the plethora of implicit societal commentary about who can parent, who should parent, who is expected to parent, how they should parent, and the judgments and consequences for those who divert from societal expectations. Examples of m(other)work, via the work included in the described exhibitions, alter the way that faculty mother/scholars are “read”; in collaboration, participants have experienced “the invaluable process involved in the rewriting of a cultural text and negotiating our audiences” (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007, para. 9).

Both exhibitions invited viewers to review and take stock of relationships involving children, parents, parenting, and non-parenting. They asked the viewers/readers to reflect upon biases and refrain from placing pressure and judgment on the lives of others. By continuing these conversations, we can gradually enlarge the space for diverse parenting and non-parenting roles/models, and further communicate the credibility and significance of a multitude of lived experiences and scholarship based in m(other)work.

CONCLUSION

Rooted in Grumet's (1998) *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, we began with the intention to rethink scholarship and academic lives through the lens of motherhood as a lived, experienced, felt, and intellectual place. Continually, we return to motherhood as a provocateur for deeply questioning the inspirations, modes, and constructs of knowing, understanding, and presenting. We have analyzed and narrated our experiences from the perspective of m(other)work, as presented in the included narratives, with the intention of standing up to adversity as mothers/scholars. By anchoring our writing in mothering, our intention is not to exclude fathers, men in (art) education, or female scholars who are not mothers. In our collaborative work, we have simply found it necessary to ground our experiences to gender and the gendered aspects of our lives, such as mothering, as socially and culturally learned positions and subjectivities that have influenced and continue to impact our experiences and notions of art, curriculum, learning, being, humanity, and pedagogy.

Stories are an essential aspect of human experience; in a sense, scholarship is constructed of the stories we tell as academics to make sense of what we do and who we are. Art education as a field and a discipline would advance from holistic forms of scholarship, such as m(other)work and collaborative construction of knowledge, for their potential to generate multiple levels and perspectives for understanding.

How "bitter" is the milk? It is made a bit sweeter by beginning to intentionally work toward integrating m(other)work into our scholarship and into our mothering. We cannot suddenly change all the adversities faced by women and parents in academia and education, but we can begin to create a climate that embraces m(other)work as a valid space/place for knowing. Although women and mothers certainly face adversity in varying degrees, we hope that our chapter is read as our attempt to portray the complexity of merging with the obstacles and/or affirmations, and meeting them as spaces and places for learning—be it learning as a space of becoming, a space of loving, or a space of questioning all upon which one has built her/his beliefs, practices, and career. Hopefully, in these spaces that allow these (re)surfacings, our thinking evolves.

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Endnotes

- ¹ This hyphenated or dashed naming of identity should not be read as built on duality, but as a fusion of fluid subjectivities and positionalities inclusive of identifiers such as an artist, curator, teacher, mentor, advisor, daughter, lover, partner, and friend. From this point forward, "mother/scholar" will be used with the intention of using this term in a broad and inclusive sense.
- ² *Mama, PhD* (2008) edited by Evans and Grant, an anthology of essays exploring the various approaches to and combinations of motherhood and academia from the perspective of lived experiences, could serve as a model for art educators in considering the mother/scholar identities. Considering the narrative nature of the short texts included in this anthology, each contribution is distinctive in content and style. The diversity of this anthology is what spoke to us, as it honors individual experiences yet unites the authors and the readers in presenting stories with refreshing directness.