

THE JOURNAL OF MOTHER STUDIES: A PEER REVIEWED, INTERNATIONAL,
INTERDISCIPLINARY, OPEN-ACCESS, DIGITAL HUMANITIES HYBRID PROJECT

by

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A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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Academic Journals are an established forum for educators and researchers to disseminate information within their field. Journals act as mediators of knowledge, advancing the canons within specific areas of study. There are currently two journals that focus on motherhood from an interdisciplinary perspective and one that focuses on fathers. However, none of these determine a specific foundational definition of what the field is, what it hopes to study, and how it will advance itself. Rather, these journals are general collections of a great number of things that touch on varying subjects regarding motherhood and fatherhood. This thesis argues for the creation of a fourth journal, *The Journal of Mother Studies* (JourMS), which will posit a foundational definition of what Mother Studies is and what a theory of this particular field would look like. This peer reviewed, international, interdisciplinary, open-access, digital humanities hybrid project, aims to serve as a nexus for ongoing explorations within the emerging field of Mother Studies as defined by the interdisciplinary study that devotes itself to the issues, experiences, topics, history, and culture of mothers, mothering, and motherhood.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic Journals are a traditional forum for educators and researchers to disseminate information within their field. Journals act as proponents and mediators of knowledge, advancing the canons within a specific area of investigation. There are currently two journals that focus on motherhood from an interdisciplinary point of view. The *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative (JMI)*, affiliated with The Motherhood Initiative for Community Involvement (MIRCI), was founded by Andrea O'Reilly in Canada, and has been a dynamic advocate for a motherhood discourse since its inception in 1999. The *Studies in the Maternal Journal*, affiliated with *Mapping Maternal Subjectivities, Identities and Ethics (MAMSIE)*, was founded in England in 2009 as an online journal with an affiliation to Birkbeck, University of London. There is also one journal focused on fathers: *Fathering*, affiliated with *The Journal of Men's Studies*, published by Sage (2003-present) The websites for each of these journals give brief descriptions of what they are.

1. *JMI*¹ is a peer-reviewed, SSHRC-funded journal that is published bi-annually.
2. *MAMSIE; Studies in the Maternal*² is an international, peer-reviewed, scholarly online journal. It aims to provide a forum for contemporary critical debates on the maternal understood as lived experience, social location, political and scientific practice, economic and ethical challenge, a theoretical question, and a structural dimension in human relations, politics and ethics. *Studies in the Maternal* provides an interdisciplinary space to extend and develop maternal scholarship, making visible the many diverse strands of work on motherhood,

¹ <http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org/>

² <http://mamsie.org/studies-in-the-maternal/>

parenting, reproduction, pregnancy, birthing, and childcare across a broad range of disciplinary and practice boundaries. In doing so, it aims to foster dialogue about the maternal and to encourage the exploration of the unique site the maternal occupies at the potent intersection between scientific possibilities, psychosocial practices, and cultural representations

3. The Journal of Fathering,³ *Fathering*: “A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers.”

These journals, as well as a plethora of publications, conferences, classes, and articles constitute what appears to be an emerging field of both Mother *and* Father Studies. The *Encyclopedia of Motherhood* (2001), published by Sage Press, has a brief chapter in its three-volume text on “Motherhood Studies,” and identifies Motherhood Studies as a “significant topic of scholarly inquiry” (831). *Fatherhood; Contemporary Theory, Research, and Social Policy* (1995), also published by Sage Publications, and the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* by Michael S. Kimmel and Jeff Hearn begins with “Much has been learned about the various dimensions of fatherhood during the past few decades” (249). One of the first questions to arise in the writing of this present document was whether a new journal should attempt to bridge a gendered discussion of what is mother, or father? Or perhaps even leave those delineations behind and consider instead the word parent; or simply caregiver, or in cases of communal living, the collective? Other questions include how to approach trans-parents and those enacting fluid definitions of the gendered self and whether discussions of motherhood and fatherhood need to include a biological position? In addition, I considered whether birth and the experience and performance of caregiving *are* gendered or *are* interchangeable? This is a

³ <http://www.mensstudies.info/journals/fathering/>

discussion that came up at the Museum of Motherhood, where I worked in New York City (2011-2014), whenever someone would ask me why there was not a Museum of Fatherhood. My answer was always the same. Until very recently, women were the birthers of children and the primary caregivers of children. For most of history (up until the last thirty years) very little has been studied, written about, or explored from the women's perspective. Therefore I am comfortable acknowledging that fact and using it as a launching point for where humanity might direct itself in the future. We will look to the women historically, and to those enacting motherhood currently, with an expectation that definitions are changing, and humanity is evolving. In what ways that is happening exactly we do not know. We must be ready for challenges. In disseminating the exhibit "New Maternalisms" and the art of motherhood, Natalie Loveless wrote, "According to a new materialist worldview, knowledge is never simply disseminated or applied, but is rather always made by its subjects as it is in turn remaking them" (12). The metaphor of "making and being made" provides the context for this author's assertion. The study of motherhood in the university, museum, and public sector are in process. As mothers, fathers, and children, we are making and being made by one another, all the time, all around the world. This discussion must and will be part of the over-arching goal of any new journal. Some working definitions must be established in order to have a starting place.

After speaking at length with Jaipaul Lalla Roopnarine, the current editor for the journal *Fathering*, I realized that he was clear about his position. *Fathering* tackles mostly psychological issues around the theory, performance, and experience of fatherhood. I also carried out discussions with my colleagues and processed different approaches during writing workshops at The Graduate Center. In those workshops, academics specializing in music theory, accounting theory, and metacognition, who were unfamiliar with gender studies, feminist studies, or mother

studies, responded to proposals that included a *Journal of Mother and Father Studies*. They did not respond well. They argued that this would make the subject matter too broad, too confusing, and too unwieldy. Additionally, diving into Mother and Father Studies might reinforce hetero-normative ideologies regarding parenthood, which cutting edge scholarship has been concerned with dismantling. While I recognize there are two exciting, emerging fields in which much on motherhood and fatherhood is being researched, written, theorized, and even taught, this thesis is not the place or time to champion both fields.

With my focus turned directly towards Mother Studies, I began assessing a starting place for determining how to pull from existing academic Mother Studies definitions to posit a clearer comprehension of where we stand. Of the three aforementioned journals, *JMI* and *Fathering* are printed journals with a paid subscription service, and *Studies in the Maternal* is online. I sat on the board of *JMI* this February and had the privilege of reading through the twenty-two submissions with a team of three others (Dr. O'Reilly has been involved in every publication since the journal's founding). In order to participate as a board member I had to commit to a trip to Toronto in person; a somewhat costly endeavor (approximately \$1,000 for flight, hotel, taxis, and food for one-and-a-half days). This is a consideration when thinking about who may or may not have the funds to sit on such a board. Also, a fee must be paid to join MIRCJ as well as a fee to subscribe to the journal. It is a common fact that academics are awarded funding for just this purpose. It is also worth noting that these financial impediments may restrict participation by para-academics or others who might be interested in learning more but lack funding.

Studies in the Maternal does a concise job of presenting what it is and what it hopes to achieve. The journal is published online twice yearly, with one issue organized around a particular topic and the second issue as an "open" issue, meaning that it accepts submissions on a

variety of topics. Back issues are available online and the journal is licensed under the creative commons. It appears to be equitably organized, with an advisory board of nine women, all affiliated with colleges. Submissions are not accepted online, and there is no opportunity for online discussion or feedback, so it does not have a truly “digital humanities” (DH) aspect. Although it appears to adhere to some DH principles (more about the digital humanities later), namely that it is free, open access, and licensed through the commons. The journal offers a handful of articles in each publication. It has the look and feel of an academic blog.

Both motherhood journals appear to be primarily collecting or curating knowledge of a certain similar thread within a feminist tradition. *JMI* and O’Reilly’s team in Canada have been doing this the longest, and although *Studies in the Maternal* offers the most complete description of what it aspires to do, there still exists a question of what these journals are doing to advance the field. Since degree courses of study at colleges around the country have not been forthcoming-- certificate programs and department building-campaigns must aim to increase legitimacy within the collegiate environment. Perhaps too, creating a “society” for Mother Studies would be a reasonable goal. In addition to journals focused solely on motherhood, there are a great number of journals not connected to Mother Studies that publish material about maternal topics. These are interspersed among different disciplines. These journals accept and publish submissions on child development, maternal health, marriage, family, breastfeeding, birth, and other aspects of gender, identity, and literature. A few examples of these (listed with their publishers) are *International Journal of Nursing and Midwifery* (Academic Journals), *The Journal of Marriage and Family* (NCFR), and *Community Work and Family* (Routledge). In these cases, articles are created within a distinct discipline and then published within that discipline. For example: sociology, psychology, history, or medical texts might feature an article

addressed to some aspect of motherhood or mothering. If we are to make true headway in advancing the credibility of this field, then more needs to be done to synthesize the material as presented in existing journals, and leverage that material in classrooms under the Mother Studies banner. This thesis posits the creation of a *Journal of Mother Studies (JourMS)* expressly devoted to the issues, experiences, topics, history, and culture of mothers, mothering, and motherhood.

The first major section of this paper is a literature review that underscores the claim to a mother identity, examines the routine omission or silencing of women's voices, and establishes a timeline for the primary works comprising the field of Mother Studies. Readers will be introduced to some of the authors, educators, publishers, artists, activists, and branding agencies that co-founded (or co-opted) the mother identity in North America. These identities have arisen simultaneously over the past fifteen to thirty years. They are: the mother "concept" in the academy, the mother "voice" in the arts, the mother "agency" as it translates from activism to popular culture, and the mother "brand" in consumer language. Various inquiries into the texts of the authors who have shaped the field of Mother Studies will ask, "What are these founding authors trying to say?" Through what lens and discipline do they present their material? Additionally, how will a journal enhance and contribute to the body of knowledge as it specifically relates to these writings? Identifying the foundational texts and providing a literature review make it possible to assess the position of current concepts of a motherhood identity as a topic worthy of academic inquiry. Recommendations will also be made as to how the *Journal of Mother Studies* would contribute to this body of knowledge. The field of Mother Studies, such as it is, and the journals, texts, and coursework, as they exist, have been greatly impacted by

cultural, political, social, and corporate climates. Like Queer Studies, Gender Studies, and even the Digital Humanities—these forces have been critical to the evolution of Mother Studies.

In the second section of this thesis I define what Mother Studies is and describe the history of its evolution. I describe some of the challenges Mother Studies has faced simply in terms of reconciling a workable definition of all that it entails. I also explore a specific theory of Mother Studies. As a relatively new area of academic interest, Mother Studies shares some similarities with the rise of the Digital Humanities (an emerging field that explores the juncture of the humanities and computing technology), as well as with Queer Studies (an area of study that deals with sexual orientation and gender identity issues). Both of these fields have many theories around which they were created. Although the terms Motherhood Studies, Mothering Studies, and Maternal Studies have all been used for different classes and texts, a theoretical definition that frames the field so that it can advance has not been forthcoming. Rather, most instances of these three terms: Motherhood Studies, Mothering Studies, and Maternal Studies, pivot on the axis of the collection; much like a curatorial exercise. Within the body of work comprising texts, classes, and motherhood causes, the main work of disseminating a variety of perspectives has served the agenda of making these voices and perspectives visible, which is the first step towards generating an actual body of work to study. Notwithstanding, the journal itself and the field in general need a clear perspective on which they can launch. I propose three things: a working definition of “mother, motherhood, and mothering,” a definition of Mother Studies, and at least one core theory that establishes how Mother Studies might affect the lens through which students of this field might interpret the work. I will then open these proposals of definitions and a core theory for responses from collaborators, and colleagues. I do this online, soliciting feedback and creating interactive dialogue using the digital humanities platform, on

which the *Journal of Mother Studies* will be built. In each of the chapters of this thesis I situate my involvement at the intersection of the personal, the arts, and the academy.

The final portion of this paper introduces and describes the digital humanities, covering what they are and how they have impacted the academy. I discuss some of the theory that informs DH, as well as the ways in which current scholarship argues for the creation of new academic journals that align with the core principles of free open-access collaboration. The practical application of DH also encourages wide dissemination of information, and employs tools that enhance interactivity. The digital humanities invite the inclusion of academics and para-academics (laypeople) alike. My thesis will then commence with the building and launching of a website for a peer reviewed *Journal of Mother Studies (JourMS)*. The website will include information about the platform, practices, and goals for its future. Therefore, a functional portal will host a digitized version of this paper, its process reports, and a “CommentPress” plugin so that readers can comprehend offer feedback on its implementation. Public forums will be encouraged.⁴ I invite the formation of an academic editorial board. A schedule for submission will also be forthcoming. The goal of this project will be to secure university press publishing for a printed version of the journal and its archives.

⁴ *CommentPress* is an open source theme and plugin for the *WordPress* blogging engine that allows readers to comment paragraph-by-paragraph, line-by-line or block-by-block in the margins of a text. Web. Future of the book: <http://futureofthebook.org/commentpress/>

CLAIMING MOTHERHOOD IDENTITIES

The best way to frame an American journal of Mother Studies is to begin with a brief history of the women who began to name and label their mother identity. This includes those mothers who expressed themselves through literature, scholarship, art, politics, and in popular culture. The sweep must be broad, necessitated by the brevity of the text. These identities have arisen simultaneously over the past fifteen to thirty years. They are: the mother “concept” in the academy, the mother “voice” in the arts, the mother “agency” as it translates from activism to popular culture, and the mother “brand” in consumer language. Largely without fanfare, “mother labeling” transpired organically from different sectors, relatively simultaneously across North America. Academics wrote about it, journalists labeled it, and people employed the terms, in much the same way as *radical feminism*, *Marxist feminism*, *queer feminism*, and other analogous classifications evolved. However, let us note that before there could be a concept of a woman who was specifically a mother, acting out her motherhood within the public sphere, there needed to be a *calling out* of this state of being. This could be conceived from multiple perspectives and through many lenses. The literature and discussion of mother identity emerged within the last few decades of the twentieth century. Within the academy in the late 1980s, a few exceptional minds found themselves examining ways to elaborate on the questions regarding motherhood. The year was 1989. I begin at this point in history⁵ for a specific and purposeful reason. This was the year I birthed my first child: in New York City, with a midwife, my former husband, and one cameraman in tow: to record the event for posterity. The birthing took place in Manhattan at the now defunct St. Vincent’s Hospital and lasted approximately eight hours. I had never heard of any sort of special mother education other than childbirth classes, which I took, and a few

⁵ I prefer the use of the word *herstory*. This is a response to the gendered male-dominated production of past historical (*herstorical*) accounts.

alternative books, such as *Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year*, and *How to Raise a Spiritual Child*, which I voraciously ingested. I had never taken a course in feminism, and I was fairly typical in the sense that my artistic, social, and political life was tepid with regard to any burning passion to change the world. Everything was fairly fine as far as I was concerned at the time.

Nonetheless, as those working from the inside of a great number of social causes will attest, everything was not fine, and it was certainly not fine in the mother-sphere. How could I have not known this? Where were the words I needed to hear, the wisdom I needed to access, and the circles I needed to enter to understand the transition I was about to undertake? Having a child changed everything. As I look back now, I realize that if someone, *anyone* could have tackled me to the ground and shoved the evidence in my face it might have offered a glimpse of the complexities to come. But, I probably would have looked the other way. The question then is how to reach the next generation of would-be mothers? How to inform them, educate them, and challenge them to have a basic knowledge about the social construction of the world in which we live? Did not Betty Friedan call out a generation to examine their female lives in her book, *The Feminine Mystique*? That was almost sixty years ago. Two waves of feminism ensued. Why did the “problem that had no name” still penetrate so many lives? As I was fond of saying in interviews after my band project began to get media attention; and I am paraphrasing here, “feminism only gets us so far, because young empowered women graduate college, go out and get jobs, enact their feminism, then get married or get pregnant; pop out a baby, and then go into the kitchen, strap on an apron, and forget who they were.” Feminist motherhood in the home sector still isn’t mainstream. Somehow the message has not translated to the birth canal, and maybe it never will.

There are several ways to begin to assess the origins of Mother Studies. As an intellectual endeavor it percolated largely under the radar until some feminist scholars began to examine motherhood from within their respective fields. A philosophical point of view could be said to include a desire towards a particular political bent, such as is the case of Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking*. Ruddick explores motherhood as a conscious activity and develops a practice of self-observance that results in what she labels maternal thinking. She argues for a "Politics of Peace" on behalf of those engaged in the raising of the next generation of human beings. This consciousness is other-oriented and pacifist focused; "a description of peacemaking is a description of *mothering*" (244). From a sociological perspective Barbara Katz Rothman encourages an examination of the patriarchal construction of a technocratic system in *ReCreating Motherhood*. She undertakes complicated issues of surrogacy and the medicalization of women's bodies, demanding a more women-centered; class-conscious, and race-centered way of dealing with high-tech advances in American culture.

Academic literature brings a message to its students, and, while it might not solve a problem, it certainly poses the possibility of exploring solutions to troubling issues. One of these troubling issues had to do with invisibility, specifically *women's* invisibility and more importantly, *mothers'* invisibility. In his seminal book, *A World Without Women*, David F. Noble traces the rise of science and society in Western Culture. "If we go back to the creation of the professional societies in the nineteenth century or of the academies in the seventeenth, we find at their inception both already bore the stamp of a world without women. A world without women did not simply emerge, it was constructed" (3 and 43). Corroborating this point of view and expanding it to include the idea that silence equals powerlessness, Sara Ruddick urged women to make the maternal audible, "Most mothers are women, and most women live in societies in

which they are relatively *powerless* with respect to men. Some women acknowledge the effort of making maternal thinking *audible*” (114). Ruddick introduced the concept of mothering itself as a form of labor and thought, able to be performed by men as well as women, that needed to be examined and articulated. For Ruddick, who quotes Audre Lorde and Alicia Ostriker in her seminal work *Maternal Thinking*, there is an *urgency to* identify the need for women to speak up, speak out, and generally be heard. Giving voice to experience and making the labor of raising children visible, is, she suggests, a powerful antidote to the invisibility that women performing caregiving work have felt and continue to feel: “Women want to name the nameless so that it can be thought...as mothers struggle towards responsible thinking, they will transform the thought they are beginning to *articulate* and the knowledge they are determined to share” (40). In this way Ruddick sets about expressing that *thing* that is exactly what I am doing now, twenty-six years later.

Rothman tackles a similar topic through the sociological lens. It is through this lens that she identifies the dominant ideologies of our culture: namely patriarchy, technology, and capitalism (26). Within this framework, men, not a *man*, espouse the dominant ideology of a society historically shaped by its Founding Fathers. Rothman writes, “women’s reality is not the dominant ideology, and women’s view of the world is overruled by men. Motherhood in a patriarchal society is what mothers and babies signify to men” (27). She goes on to establish the ways in which women, women’s labor, and the babies they love are “products.” She vehemently objects to this way of thinking. “It is an objection to the notion of the world as a machine, the body as a machine, everything subject to hierarchical control, the world, ourselves, our bodies and our souls, ourselves and our children, divided, systematized, reduced” (54). In this way women are once more silenced, voiceless, unimportant, and unidentifiable as significant

autonomous creatures. What makes this work revolutionary is that in 1989, Rothman brought an entirely new topic to the field of sociology. She used the lens of sociology to view, understand, and make motherhood visible from within the academy. It is at this historical juncture that Ruddick and Rothman begin to take the thing, which is motherhood, out of the box, or in this case the house, or uterus, or consciousness. They then examine it, explore it, write about it, think about it, and—perhaps most importantly—begin to name it as a pre-cursor to visibility. Rothman asserts emphatically that this tradition of examination and liberation builds on feminist traditions, now ready and willing to take on motherhood. “I believe we can have a feminist analysis of mothers and motherhood that is consistent with feminist politics and feminist theory in all areas” (25).

Thirteen years before, Beacon Press published Ruddick’s groundbreaking *Maternal Thinking* and Penguin published Rothman’s *Recreating Motherhood*, I was starting my freshman year of college. The year was 1976 and I was probably one of the most sheltered children ever to head off to a collegiate environment. Deathly afraid that I would do something to jeopardize my inherent wellbeing, my parents shielded me from every social, political, and real issue that the 1960s and 1970s had served up. I was frankly oblivious, a slightly tortured, vividly-imaginative, Protestant White female from the Midwest. I was completely caught up in simply surviving away from home. So great was my pain at being separated from my parents that first year of college, I cried myself to sleep every night. Football players commented on my breasts each time I went to the cafeteria for a meal. Mortification was my constant companion. I acted out wildly, mostly sexually, and couldn’t imagine there was an antidote for the kind of pain I had, so I threw myself into the theater and deeper into fantasy.

Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, published by Norton

Press in 1976 and written by Adrienne Rich, came out a full thirteen years before Ruddick's and Rothman's works and four years in advance of Phyllis Chesler's *With Child* (1979). Pregnancy for me was not even a thought in the recesses of my mind. Rich leveraged feminist theory to examine motherhood as an institution. In her chapter, "The Primacy of the Mother," she initiates a discourse into the abyss of history that constitutes the undocumented lives of women. "As women we have been every culture's core obsession and repression; we have always constituted at least one-half, and are now in a majority, of the species; yet in the written records we can barely find ourselves" (84). She goes on to confront what she terms this "Great Silence," and admonishes that we have the choice of one of two paths to follow, to either be silence keepers or silence breakers.

The identifications of Rich's, Ruddick's, and Rothman's inspiration over the years eventually led to the self-identification of "feminist mothers" and to the slow spread of a plethora of mother identities, some of which will now seem familiar: "maternal philosopher," "maternal theorist," "feminist mother," which are all now embodied in the public sphere. These notions of self-identification have allowed further examinations into motherhood to flourish and have paved the way to coursework found in today's universities and interdisciplinary forums..

Precisely ten years before Ruddick and Rothman's books were published, the year I graduated from college, still sheltered and relatively naïve, *Working Mother Magazine* was founded (1979). On the heels of the mainstream Second Wave Feminist movement, which focused on equal opportunities for women in the workplace (among other things), *Working Mother Magazine* (*WMM*) picked up that banner and ran with it. The magazine incorporated the concept of mothers as workers outside the home and as viable contributors to the national discourse as well as the labor force. The "working mother" message focused on issues such as

equal pay, flexible work schedules, and childcare. Primarily a “how to” advocacy magazine for corporations and their female employees, *WMM*’s website says it has grown to readership of 2.2 million and is part of a Bonnier Publishing, a company with more than \$200 million in revenue. The working mother identity helps to prioritize women’s labor in the American workforce, helping to balance the Feminist agenda of followers of Betty Friedan in the sense that the “housewife” has left her home. The magazine makes an appeal on issues of diversity, best work practices, and The Multicultural Women’s National Conference. The corporate mother continues to perpetuate herself through books like President of *Working Mother* magazine’s, Carol Evans’, *This Is How We Do It* (2006) and symbolic movements like Sheryl Sandberg’s *Lean In* (2013). It makes sense, given American’s proclivity towards capitalism, that the idea of the working mother as a purely economic construct is perhaps the most widespread, marketable, and visible concept amongst the manifold identities.

Spearheading a charge to make feminist motherhood visible in Canada, Andrea O’Reilly, whose first book was co-edited by Sharon Abbey in 1998, opens her book, *Redefining Motherhood*, with a poem: “M/Other” by Rishma Dunlop that begins, “The f/act of m/other contains in us differences, yet we are pulled by the heart’s tides the pulses of our children’s veins, the salt of their tears.” The book comprises eighteen essays that seek to give authentic voice to the realities of motherhood in a scholarly conversation that challenges unrealistic ideals, and narrow stereotypes. The collection, according to Reilly and Abbey, intends to “document the voices of women who are engaged in ongoing conversations about motherhood” (14). Around the same time O’Reilly founded the ARM (now renamed MIRCI) organization and introduced classes on “feminist motherhood” at York College in Toronto. Not enough can be said about O’Reilly in terms of her ability to gather and collect testimony—enough at least to raise the

decibels beyond an inaudible whisper in the academy. This is only fair and right, since Ruddick's call to examine mother labor implored, "it is only by collecting our many stories" (54) that we will be heard, while Rich wrote that prior to her book most authoritative voices on motherhood came from experts, and that "female sources were rarely cited; and there are virtually no primary sources of women-as-mothers" (16). Rothman furthered the discussion, stating that her work "attempts to carve out new definitions of motherhood, of relationships, of parents, and children." She makes it clear that she wants us to expand our vocabulary and our consciousness to include multiple ways of viewing, being, and enacting motherhood (18).

Acknowledging the arguable failure of much of the second wave feminist movement and of American society in general to adequately address poor, single, imprisoned, LGBTQ, non-White, Black, Latina, Arab and other women puts authors who address these topics at a pinnacle of importance. Patricia Hill Collins penned *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and Politics of Empowerment* in 1990. Published by Routledge, Collins's book draws from fiction, poetry, music, and oral tradition to depict the stories, lives, and meaning entwined in Black American motherhood and citizenship. Collins argues that hegemonic definitions of family are problematic for African American families since these definitions are not representative of their lives. In the dominant cultural ideal the home is conceived of as the "sphere of women," and the outside world is the "sphere of men." These notions assume a separation of work and family. Black women's experiences of working either without pay in "the public sphere of agriculture [in the case of slavery], had their family privacy violated," or they worked outside the home for pay, which put them in competition with men, and according to these imagined ideals they became less "feminine" (47). She suggests we need to deconstruct these assumptions about what an ideal family is and contest these definitions (48).

Texts such as these, created by women who have the intellectual capacity to explain that we are in a continual process of making, and unmaking our notions of ourselves and our concepts about ourselves, as well as our children, are at the forefront of what any modern motherhood movement is. This could be defined as the constantly expanding analysis of identity, action, and theory and its ongoing creations.

I had begun ruminating about gender, power, and motherhood in 1989 after the birth of my first boy. For a person engaged in mothering with only a general reference to feminist theory, who was living outside of the academy and lacking exposure to its methods for research and discourse, the possibility of locating access to truly meaningful conceptual advances was implausible. In other words, I was in the situation most American mothers find themselves in: lacking the important and rarified position of illuminated connection.

1993 is the year assigned to the launch of *Hip Mama*⁶, the “original alternative- parenting magazine.” I was about to deliver my third boy-child, and my New York mom friends and I *were* alternative. We were living the lifestyle, as an assorted bunch of artists, filmmakers, musicians, and teachers. Together we were sorting things out in a kind of shared tribal bliss, despite the usual and inevitable new-parent hiccups. We were for the most part innocent in our recognition of any forthcoming impending life-obstructing health tragedies. Aside from our general and shared issues of divorce, miscarriage, single parenthood, financial concerns, and worry over our young, we existed in a fairly benign state. I was especially innocent as I was still in the midst of milky, burp-stained outings in the public parks of the city, happy in my life, and embraced by my circle of girlfriends. This was a full year-and-a-half before my move up-river to the suburbs. According to Mielle Chandler in her chapter on “Emancipated Subjectives” in *Redefining*

⁶ The definition I pulled from the online source for *Hip Mama*. Web. <http://hipmamazine.com/subscribe/>

Motherhood, a magazine like *Hip Mama* featured “legitimizing articles by socially illegitimated mothers: stripper moms, queer moms, and poor moms” (283). This described many of my friends. The magazine gave voice to “radical, poor, young, single, queer, and angry” moms. Refusal tactics shattered dominant ideologies. In this way, edgy publications like *Hip Mama* offered women an opportunity to “embrace motherhood while subverting prevalent conceptions of the ‘good’ mother” (283). So then, where are the *good* mothers, and where do notions of *good* mothers come from in our Western society? Certainly they must be in the suburbs, living perfectly perfect lives of quiet desperation.

I began to explore my own ambivalent relationship to motherhood in America through music one year before O’Reilly co-wrote her first book in Canada. But, before I tell that tale some background information is required. After moving to New York City in 1980, I found my way quickly to the downtown music scene where I enthusiastically dubbed myself Peter Blue and proceeded to have a career as a gender-bending punk rocker. It occurs to me all these years later that I am very good at acting out a problem but not always quick to identify what the problem might be. Peter Blue was a way for me to claim power in a music scene dominated by men. By the time I’d completed an MTV competition under my own name in 1984, I met the man I would marry and left the music scene at the age of thirty-one to birth four children in five years. My subsequent music project, at the age of forty, was aptly named, “Housewives on Prozac.” I sought to examine through song, the socially numbing experience of moving from my gritty downtown artist-loft in the heart of New York City with four babies to the suburbs. This adventure was interrupted by an extreme and almost deadly case of SLE (Lupus), brought on by pregnancy. That, too, was not without its consequences. Upon emergence from my hospital bed, I awoke to the multiple ramifications of participating in a white, homogenous, middle class

community, which, for the issues that this thesis intends to navigate, seemed fraught for many of my peers with a banality, frustration, and impotence brought on by dutiful wifeliness and a significantly antagonistic social status. Everyone was more than a little lost. My *Housewives* project began in 1997, when I flagged the church organist, who also had four children of exactly the same age, and I began a musical journey of ironically poking fun at myself, and my community members for the choices we had made and the situations that ensued. The intention of *Housewives* was to forge an opening for cultural commentary on the experiences of being a mother. The name was derived from observations of women perpetuating retro stereotypes in suburban culture. I noticed the prevalence of Prozac and other mood-altering drugs. For some of my peers, prescriptions purported to offer an antidote to the difficulties of raising children. I found it disturbing that many women felt they had more in common with 1950s housewives than they did with second wave feminists after starting families. By this time my burgeoning feminist thinking was beginning to catch up to me.

There was also a very real attempt to engage in a process of self-discovery on my part. As an artist, I was one thing. As a mother, I was something else. In this something-else state, I was a person that my former artist friends seemed to fear and loathe. Therefore, musically speaking, I was exiled from my former solo-singer-self and left to contemplate the irreparable change that had occurred through the act of procreation. In those days, musicians did not reconcile their sex-symbol identity with motherhood. There was no *Pink* singing a lullaby album or *JLo* touting twins. (Although I must add, the sexualizing of motherhood was not something I was aiming to bring about). Because of birth and motherhood, I had in fact become someone else entirely. But who was I? Was there no ready answer available to me? Books that talked in the first-person about motherhood were not in the popular discourse. I was not a feminist scholar,

nor a student. Pregnancy and art were *not* hot topics. There was no meaningful dissemination on this subject that could adequately aid my understanding of the social construction of the world in which I had gestated. Nor was there anything that could help me to express my womanliness, citizenship, and authority. (Barbara Katz Rothman where were you? Writing books I was not privy to, I suppose.) At that juncture I was a suburban housewife. I slowly came to envision a course of action by which I might begin to examine this person I was, a mother performing mothering—living in a world that had pre-constructed the role of motherhood well before I ever heard the call. I began to sing about the less-than-flattering aspects of the maternal journey. I wrote songs like “I Only Wanna Pee Alone,” “Eat Your Damn Spaghetti,” and “Fuzzy Slippers,” the lyrics of which began, “I wipe my baby’s chin with my college diploma, and wonder how did I ever get here?” (Remember, I am good at acting out a problem, even when I don’t have the language to specifically identify what that problem might be.)

In 1997 a review for the HOP band gave way to off-Broadway equity production of *Shut Up and Drive* (1999), a rock musical about my life. The *Housewives and Prozac* band and I continued to play large-scale events including Giant’s Stadium, The Oakland Art & Soul Festival, New York Pride Rallies, and other venues across the country. We also appeared on television, including CNN, *Good Morning America*, and local news stations. This was the first Mom-Rock identified enterprise. By identifying myself as a mother who was making music about my experiences of motherhood, I intended to carve a path for other artists, comics, literary-types, poets, and performers whose mother status now informed and affected their perspectives. Putting background music to life’s ups and downs became a way of life. In fact, the bumper stickers and band slogans we sold at gigs and on tee shirts at various shows said things like: “Housewives on Prozac; not just a band, it’s a way of life,” “Mrs. Trouble,” and “Moms Rock.”

By 2004 a *Women's E-News* story announced, "Mother's Day Rocks for Break the Mold Moms." The breakout article was the first to tie the various pieces of the disparate cultural mom movement together in one place. The article began by asking, "Why are these moms strapping on guitars?" I know that historically speaking, music has been used to break down barriers, create change, and shape liberating movements. Examples such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman penning Suffragist songs in the 1911; Harry Pace creating Black Rose Records in the 1930s, which was a "radical attempt to confront, challenge, and disrupt the invisibility of [Blacks] in the modern music industry" (*Selling Sounds* 205); we all know Elvis Presley was banned from the Ed Sullivan show for his radical hip-waving in the 1950s; and then Woodstock along with the rise of many artists of the 1960s; who, like Bob Dylan for example, focused on social disruption. Sid Griffin wrote about Dylan in his book, *Shelter From the Storm*, "While art may be a beneficiary of commercial enterprise, Rolling Thunder (Dylan's tour) was much more of a cultural happening". A cultural *happening*—that was exactly what we were in the middle of. The *Women's E-News* article went on to write about the ways in which the mothers involved in this wave were dismantling stereotypes and shaking things up. "Social commentators say these women break the mold because, while nurturing their children with every ounce of their love, they're not afraid to cut loose and be themselves. One [woman] describes herself as 'A queer 22-year-old single mama to an adorable turkey-baster baby.'" *E-News* concluded with the assertion that we were going to create a better world.

"Building a Better Generation." For those of us who were active in *break the rules mode*, it means "Women who are part of the new mom rebellion hope their bohemian, break-the-rules approach will free them—and their children—to lead more fulfilling lives. As they launch their own Web zines and dye their hair different shades of neon, these moms

are encouraging their children to express themselves, too. They're allowing their sons to wear nail polish.

The article ends with a quote from my story before including a list of multiple organizations mothers could get involved with. "'Every mother was someone before she had children,' says Joy Rose, the lead singer of Housewives on Prozac. 'She still is someone after she gives birth.'"

Much like the scholars I have mentioned in this article, I was searching for ways to identify motherhood within the artistic realm. What happens to the woman who becomes a mother? How does her identity shift? What is mother art? How is it the same *or* different that the art she made before? How is mother-art enacted in the performance sphere? Does she have something specific she is trying to say? Here is a partial list of book titles cited in a *Women's E-News* 2005 article as examples of the ways in which literary mothers were also striving to find their voices via resource books for like-minded moms, with titles like *Afro Mama*, *Mamaphonic*, *The Mother Trip: Hip Mama's Guide to Staying Sane in the Chaos of Motherhood*, *Whatever Mom and Breeder: Real-Life Stories from the New Generation of Mothers*, all from independent, small press publishers.

After observing the resonance of the Mom-Rock phenomenon, I decided in early 2001 to move towards multiple events in 2002 that would open the doors of opportunity for others. The first "Mamapalooza Festival" was conceived and produced in New York City. Hundreds of performers were able to organize and participate subsequently in performances around the world. By 2004 *The Wall Street Journal* reported on the burgeoning mom "movement," and by 2005 over 250 bands, comics, poets, actors, and singer-songwriters were playing on national Mamapalooza stages at 22 different locations. The festival had even spread to four different countries with bands like the Mydols (2002), FRUMP (2003), and Placenta (2004). At the same

time, Demeter Press launched its first feminist books focused specifically on the topic of motherhood/mothering (2005). The nature of both activities lent themselves to identifying a collective of mom rockers and mother feminist/academics. I write the above to demonstrate the inter-connectedness of these economic, philosophical/political, academic/artistic and popular creations that were forming themselves, as mothers engaged in the shaping of their new mother identities which now also included: “mom-rocker,” “mother activist,” and “working mother.”

While feminists diversified into more and more specialized manifestations of themselves, women who thought of themselves as feminists were continuing the process of interpreting their feminism within the context of motherhood. Another breakthrough work edited by O’Reilly featured a collection of theoretical perspectives. *Maternal Theory (2007)* consolidated a maternal feminist theory into one place, promoting a scholarly approach that is both inclusive and far-reaching. Native American, Hispanic, and Black authors lend their perspectives to the collection. Her introduction lists the diversity of aspects the Demeter Catalogue has promoted, examining motherhood from a multitude of perspectives.

Sexuality, peace, religion, public policy, literature, work, popular culture, health, care-work, caregiving, ethnicity, becoming a mother, young mothers, motherhood and feminism, mothers and sons, mothers and daughters, Aboriginal mothering, queer parenting, third-wave mothering, adoption, mothering and blogging, and the motherhood movement. (1)

O’Reilly continues in her introduction to give credibility to Joyce Trebilcot’s 1983 collection *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory (Redefining Motherhood 1)*, a work that I was not familiar with but which is now understood to be the creation and original foundation of

Women's and Gender Studies within the academy in 1972.⁷ Within the *Maternal Theory* volume of selected works, Rothman weighs in with among the most salient chapters in the collection. In the chapter "Beyond Mothers and Fathers; Ideology in a Patriarchal Society" – a text that is full of rich and relevant associations—the view points to the ideology of a patriarchal society. Within this construct she writes about the ways in which the dominant viewpoint clouds or usurps our *seeing* within a society. In the case of motherhood, women in a patriarchal system are more or less replaceable containers for men's seed: interchangeable and virtually irrelevant in terms of identity or identity-making, as they are "unskilled workers in an assembly line, conceptualized as machines, containers holding precious, genetic material" (395). In that same vein she also asserts, "The ideology of a patriarchal society goes much deeper than male dominance. It means far more than just having men in charge, or men making more decisions than women do. The ideology of patriarchy is a basic worldview, and in a patriarchal system that view permeates all of our thinking" (393). This true and well-articulated standpoint is both riveting and sound, while specifically summing up a position that I feel is perhaps the most notable of all propositions regarding mothers and society.

In tandem with many general issues being explored within the culturally dominant forces of 2003 America, *The Bitch in the House* was released as a collection of mother authors in mainstream literature. They recognized the "successes born out of the various waves of feminist politics from the late 1960s."⁸ However, lingering frustrations remained. These frustrations had no specific name. They encompassed a general outcry regarding the competing burdens of career and motherhood, and they resonated powerfully with dominant popular culture, registering an impact on conversations about motherhood. The book itself represented the writings of 26

⁷ Obituary. Web. <http://news.wustl.edu/news/Pages/14297.aspx>

⁸ Online review of *The Bitch In The House*. Web. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/mar/29/highereducation.news1>

authors, thus enforcing the collective nature of what was being articulated. A surge of press articles appeared, too numerous to mention. The media was abuzz at this point with “mother everything.”

I recently pulled from my press kit a few of the headlines of the period: “Mommie Loudest” (2004, *The Wall Street Journal*), “Mothers Who Rock” (2004, *Mothers Who Rock*), “Mommie Rebellion” (2004, *Chicago Tribune*), and “The Bands That Rock the Cradle” (2005, *USA Today*) to name a few. My life had become a bandwagon of media attention, and, while it was fun for a while, no self-respecting feminist, activist, or mother can really think that the mainstream newspapers and television news shows are really invested in liberating mothers as a force into places of true power and esteem. Despite this, in a nod to some modicum of success perhaps someone was actually listening. The *USA Today* story acknowledged that our mother’s movement was making noise, “not with a measured whisper, but with a snarl, cymbal crash and power E-chord that would make the lads in AC/DC stand and salute” (*USA Today*, Jan. 31, 2005). Whatever confusion remained about exactly how we came to be in the position we found ourselves in as women (and some men) seeking a voice, Kinser clarified in her well-crafted book, *Motherhood and Feminism*. The book tied together the history of the first, second, and third wave feminist movements into a modern motherhood movement. Kinser put an especially edifying spin on everything from a consolidation of many of the pertinent points of American women’s struggles, how we got to where we are today, as well as complex notions of binary thinking, and women’s inferior place within this construct. She writes, “Cartesian dualism has significance for feminist thought because the world of the “mind” has generally been assigned to men (of the dominant class and race), and the world of the “body” has typically been assigned to women (and also to men of lower social status)” (10). Her thinking is similar to Rothman’s

“seeds and pots” metaphor, whereby mothers have no real lasting import themselves or a claim to positions of power. This is not to say that this naming and claiming is not without its difficulties, no matter how loud one shouts, or how visible one becomes.

Attempting to pinpoint a definition can also prove limiting, a point Mielle Chandler argues in her chapter, “Emancipated Subjectivities and the Subjugation of Mothering Practices,” in *Redefining Motherhood*. “The problematic arises when, in the name of liberation, untying ‘woman’ from ‘mother’ results in or leads to a delineation of liberation that precludes mothering” (280). She proceeds to elaborate on Butler, Foucault, and Bouvier. Foucault, she writes, believes that “identity is a dangerous game” because “the government of individuation ties one to a specific identity. Ultimately she dismisses “hyper-conformity” because “the baby will always disrupt the simulation” (283). In other words the identity, actions, and roles are constantly changing. For me arguments against using “mother” as identity fall short. As an artist, seeking to display my experiences with “otherness,” a persistent, disquieting, insistent otherness, is directly tied to my sense of self. This additionally means, to quote Chandler, “To refuse the identity “mother” would “also be a refusal of the kind of self a mothering self becomes through mothering” (282). Therefore, given the choice of refusal, even for political reasons, would not result in the kind of empowerment that I would find authentic. Rather than refuse or ignore it, I have taken it on (along with a whole host of others) to best determine how I might invest in its use. Or, as Rothman asserts in *Recreating Motherhood*, on sex, self, and the making of a mother (and other) in birth, “We ignore the fact that the baby has been sleeping in its mother’s bed, and in its mother’s body, all along. We act in every way as if the baby were foreign, and we make of it a foreigner, an alien, a “little stranger.” But it is not an alien, it is part of its mother, a newly separated part, coming into its own separate existence” (100). And, I would add, goes on forever

walking outside our bodies like a small piece we can never (nor would we want to) recover. Likewise, “maternal philosophers,” “maternal theorists,” and “mom-rockers,” as well as contemporary “mom-authors,” float though the national consciousness and across our computer screens as they more and more refuse to *refuse* their identity as a *whole-mother-entity*, which in part requires a natural and necessary separation from their offspring, which also commands an eternal and undeniable connection.

As of this writing, Moms Rising—an activist organization dedicated to lobbying mothers around family-friendly policies—has over a million members. Ephemera.com carries buttons and magnets that say “Moms Rock,” while the “Housewives of Beverly Hills” make trouble on TV and sip martinis (I turned down offers to do a reality show), and “The Moms” have their own radio show. Newest to the party are the “Mom Bloggers,” riding the wave of the internet and straddling categories as far disparate as “Mormon Moms,” to “The Feminist Breeder.” In the midst of these many emerging organizations, a number of other literary, political, and performance-oriented individuals and groups flourished, and are flourishing, including (but not limited to): Mocha Moms, Bad Mother’s Club, Mothers and More, Moms on the Move, Momeddy Comedy, Mamazina Magazine, Moms Rising, Literary Mama, National Association of Mothers Centers (now renamed Mom-mentum), the Museum of Motherhood, and so many more. Motherhood is here, as identity and theory. Unfortunately, while there is growth, there is still much work to be done.

ABOUT MOTHER STUDIES AND THE THEORY OF MOTHERNESS

The *Encyclopedia of Motherhood* begins its brief entry on “Motherhood Studies” by asserting that the subject of motherhood has emerged within the academy in the last thirty years as a significant topic of scholarly inquiry. It goes on to say that “Motherhood Studies has developed into three interconnected categories of inquiry: motherhood as institution, motherhood as experience, and motherhood as identity or subjectivity” (vol. 2, 831). In the case of Motherhood Studies, the study has been constructed around the word: *motherhood*. But, we have three words available to us: mother, mothering, and motherhood. Each word connotes something different. However, for the purposes of this thesis and for any scholar who wishes to study mothers, mothering, or motherhood in the academy, more development of this idea would be beneficial. In this chapter I explore the use of the words: mother, mothering, and motherhood. I wrestle with a theory of motherness or mother-ness and construct a working definition of what Mother Studies is, as well as track the history of its evolution. This evolutionary tale accounts for my own position within its trajectory. I also describe some of the challenges Mother Studies has faced in terms of earning legitimacy within the academy.

I begin with the broad statement that every human being is the result of procreative experience. This procreative experience and resulting birth action transpires via a mother, historically a woman, but perhaps sometimes in the twenty-first century via a man (a male mother as in the case of a trans man): perhaps in the future via an artificial womb? The intention here is to point out that we are defining a mother even in cases of more fluid identity. As I stated in the introduction, it is acceptable to formulate a position relative to a historical recognition of what has been and then move ahead in continual redefinition. For most of history (up until the last thirty years) very little has been studied, written about, or explored from the women’s

perspective. Therefore I am comfortable acknowledging that fact and using it as a launching point for where humanity might direct itself in the future. Subsequent accounts may include gender discussions, as well as biological considerations. Those would be welcome. At this point in the development of Mother Studies however, we will look to the women historically, and to those enacting motherhood currently, with the expectation-- definitions are changing, and humanity is evolving. In terms of exploring what it has meant to be a mother, and what it means to *me* to be a mother, I offer up the notion of “other-ness” which is a foundational concept. But, first let us explore further the use of the various words available to us.

In this section I aim to dynamically explore multiple articulations of mother, mothering, motherhood. I differentiate between Motherhood Studies, which examines the institution of motherhood, and *mothering*, which examines the praxis of motherhood. *Motherhood* is generally understood as the social system in which mothering is performed. Adrienne Rich articulates it thus, “[motherhood] the institution, has been a keystone of the most diverse social and political systems” (13). *Mothering* shall be defined as the action, which I will elaborate more on throughout this text, and *mother* is the individual, the identity of a person, or even a planet, in the case for example of “mother earth” as I have identified earlier. The premise for the discipline must examine the lived experience of mother, within all of these interpretations of mother, mothering, and motherhood. It is also important to acknowledge the external forces: physical, social, emotional, and scientific that act around and upon the mother. There is precedence in the academy with: "Food" Studies, "Fashion" Studies, “and "Queer" Studies,” which sound as though they are object studies, but they are not. They are multi-perspective, and interdisciplinary.

To reiterate, mothers are defined as those performing mothering labor within social constructions of motherhood: their individual perspectives and experiences as well as a framework of fluid and varying gender differentiations and the oppositional constraints imposed upon them. Likewise, in some capacity or other every person has been raised by someone performing mothering labor. Mothering labor is the enactment of gestation, gestational contribution (perhaps even as in egg donation? I am mothering my eggs to give to another?), birth or caregiving work. Sometimes we say we are mothering a pet, a plant, or a project. These notions will require more theoretical examination, but not for the purposes of this thesis. For our purposes, mothering can be applied to all these things, and especially the ways in which it is currently recognized within contemporary society. This notion was seminal in Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking*, in which she asserted that men could mother, just as women do. "A mother is a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives and for whom providing child care is a significant part of her or his working life" (40). In this way Ruddick attempts to assign the action of mothering as an activity that can be applied regardless of biological or gendered constructions. Rothman also seeks to destabilize limiting notions of gender, biology or genetics. She moves away from kinship as the primary definition of mothering, and expands the concept of family to, "more than genetics, more than lineage," towards "families made interracially, inter-culturally, internationally, gay and lesbian, as alternative kinds of families" (19). One contemporary example of this unconfined status came to fruition on January 30, 2015 when media outlets announced that New York City hospitals now offer City Health Department forms that allow birthing mothers to identify as either female or male. Media outlets included the statement, "To be clear, it is possible for a person who has given birth to a child to identify as male," said Susan

Sommer, a lawyer for Lambda Legal, an advocacy group for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people (*New York Post*).

The notion of exactly what makes a mother: birth, caregiving, egg donation, or identity can all be debated. Here our assertion is that however we define mother there is always a relational aspect, hence the idea of m/other, m/otherness, or mother-ness. I first saw the term *m-other* framed by the American artist Beth Osnes in 2008 (Mothers Acting Up). The separation of *m* and *o* gives a pause to the connections within the word. More recently the *M/other Voices Project*, in which *m* and *other* are separated by a slash was pioneered by the Dutch scholar Deirdre Donoghue who explored the idea further:

The maternal functions as a system of seeing, thinking, and relating to the world. A system which completely breaks away from the binaries of the feminine/masculine oppositions through the maternal body's pivotal role to natality and otherness.

(Deidre M. Donoghue and Paula McCloskey in conversation. June 2013.)⁹

The theory of Mother Studies I propose examines the transformational nature of the constantly evolving intersections of personal and relational status of me + other (m/other). An essential component of this theory proposes an examination of how m/otherness or mother-ness is the experience of being connected, or disconnected, to one who is part of you, or of being a person who, as part of another and/or intrinsically linked to another, genetically, or through caregiving, or by association, might inform action in a world conceived as *relational*. This view differs from a history shaped by alienation and enacted by violent, external, institutional, hierarchical social constructions. As Rothman asserts in the *Book of Life*, “The world that I live in, and the world that I want for my children, is not a world of scattered isolated individuals, and not a world of walls. It is a world of communities, of social solidarity, of connectedness between

⁹ From *M/other Voices*. Web. <http://www.mothersvoices.org/art-research-and-theory/>

individuals and between communities, a world in which people and communities grow from and into each other.” (233). She explains that motherhood is “otherhood.” He/she is one who divides, but through his/her division he/she is paradoxically increased. He/she divides and simultaneously multiplies. Likewise a theory of mother-ness privileges the conversation of difference (or division) and insists on tolerant engagement (connection) and intense intellectual curiosity as a fundamental practice.

Because Mother Studies dismantles norms and challenges pre-existing assumptions, its identity is constantly in flux within a system that insists on cultivating respect along with compassion. Respect could be what Sara Ruddick is arguing for in her “*Maternal Thinking and politics of peace,*” which should be explored more fully at another time. At this juncture, in order to move into the next section of the text where I trace the history of Motherhood Studies, I offer a working definition of what Mother Studies is: *Mother Studies is a field of interdisciplinary study devoted to the issues, experiences, topics, history, and culture of mothers, mothering, and motherhood.* As I have stated, it goes by different names according to who is teaching it. I have outlined an argument for calling this developing field Mother Studies rather than Motherhood Studies and I continue to expound. However delightful it might be to propose deeply intellectual assertions about-theories of Mother Studies, its practical implications are still somewhat illusive. I move now to the history of how Motherhood Studies (as it has been called in the past), and how it progressed, or did not progress, in the university setting. In a 2011 article for the University of Chicago Press, Samira Kawash wrote “As the director of one of seven PhD programs in women’s and gender studies in the mid-2000s, I do not recall receiving a single graduate student application that proposed a study of mothering or motherhood” (271). Indeed, even today, as I am poised for graduation, my self-titled individualized major at CUNY, The Graduate Center,

has been fashioned for this express purpose: to pave the way for others who would also impart knowledge of this distinctive area of expertise. My forthcoming degree in Mother Studies (a combined major in Digital Humanities and Women's and Gender Studies) is a first, and aimed at facilitating the growth of the field. This degree has been over eight years in the making. I first engaged Lynn Kuechle, a good friend who was then teaching at Minnesota State University, in Mankato, to approach feminist scholar Jocelyn Stitt in 2007 to help us design and implement a degreed course of studies called "Mother Studies." We met in a small classroom, bursting with excitement and passion over the prospect. We had just come from two years worth of multi-pronged activism and art that espoused mom-made poetry, music, crafts, and business in conjunction with Mamapalooza and the Women's Media Center in NYC, alongside our collaboration for a Women's and Gender Studies production of the same in Mankato. Stitt seemed interested, if a tad bit dubious. The wheels of time spun slowly while intermittent talks eventually went as far as the provost, with promises of the possibility of introducing such a program. Then Kuechle moved into another job, and I was in New York City managing multiple arts and media events among other things. Our efforts resulted in one online summer class called "Introduction to Mothering Studies," which was put together as a Feminist course by Stitt. I immediately signed up and proceeded to have my world rocked to the extent that I am now here, enrolled in the university for my own degree.

After eight years of steady pressure, I questioned why more progress has not been forthcoming. Perhaps it was in part because of the diversity of aspects the field Mother Studies represents. In addition to such matters of identity as race and class, there are lesbian, gay, and trans-gender perspectives, adoptive experiences, surrogacy, IVF assisted technologies, and a plethora of other global perspectives. Was the subject too big? Was it just too unwieldy? Since

Mother Studies in North America arguably emerged from the white middle class in much the same way feminism's first and second wave did; was resistance to its establishment embedded internally as well as externally? In other words, not only could we *not* organize ourselves from an interdisciplinary perspective, but could we also collectively *not* agree on who would be included in the field? Perhaps more complicated than Fashion Studies, African Studies, or Food Studies, Mother Studies aims at such a universal experience fraught with personal, psychological, social, and political issues. Tackling the subject of motherhood, even from an academic perspective, drills to the core of everything that has been interpreted as *wrong* with us as individuals within our society. There is the familiar joke: *If you have a problem, go and blame it on your mother*. Books such as *Good Mother Bad Mother*¹⁰, essays and articles (listed below) abound with language about "mother blame." In addition there is the issue of the complex relationship each of us navigates with our own mothers. "There is a long history of society blaming mothers for the ill health of their children" or "previous generations found other ways to blame women. As late as the 1970s, 'refrigerator mothers' (a disparaging term for a parent lacking emotional warmth) were faulted for their children's autism" ("Society; don't blame the mothers," *Nature*). Or, as Adrienne Rich goes on to analyze in Freudian terms in *Of Woman Born*, "Besides the very ancient resentment of woman's power to create new life there is fear of her apparent power to affect the male genitals. Woman as elemental force and as sexual temptress and consumer of his sexual energies, thus becomes for man, a figure generating anxiety" (115).

In *A World Without Women*, Noble reflects on "patriarchal norms of pagan and Jewish society, with their assumptions of female pollution and women's subordination to men" (43). In

¹⁰ Mothers today face relentless criticism and pressure. Breast or bottle? Work or stay at home? Routine or feeding-on-demand? The choices are infinite and at the heart of each question is the more controversial and divisive debate of what makes a good mother. <http://www.amazon.com/Good-Mother-Bad-Gina-Ford/dp/0091954967>

much the manner Nancy K. Miller describes an incident in her book *Extremities*, in the chapter “Memory Stains,” where the character of Annie Ernaux witnesses the violence perpetrated by her father on her mother, which is followed by collusion within the family to minimize the event for the sake of the collective, as if it never really happened, and insinuating that it should not cause permanent trauma (198). To elaborate on this, what if a daughter’s murky relationship to her mother is not constructed on an authentic need for daughters to disassociate from their mothers in order to negotiate autonomy, as many feminist texts have asserted, but rather a socially constructed world where women are base, with ties to earth, dirt, blood, and birth. They are literally associated with excrement, and therefore they *are* shit. Yet, now I am a mother, and I know that I am not shit. So, I must be suspicious of the part of me that views my mother as excrement and question whether that is an authentic gaze or a reflection of what *my* society has taught me to believe. Finally, the academic theory and praxis of something so ungainly; as well as thoroughly complex, intimate, and universal poses intellectual havoc on any who might inherit its realm. Be that as it may, those who have gone before have buoyed me up, and I will attempt to take up where they have left off.

The interdisciplinary study of motherhood has been active, yet fragmented within the university setting for all of its history. Before motherhood as a discipline of study could be assembled, much groundwork was laid by feminists like Rothman, Ruddick, O’Reilly, Kinser, and many more.¹¹ They have all written about, studied, and taught on a variety of topics: Maternal Health, Maternal Thinking, History of Motherhood and Feminism, and Feminist Motherhood. Some within institutions of higher learning believe that motherhood has enough merit to constitute a legitimate area of investigation and theory, while some remain unconvinced.

¹¹ The Museum of Motherhood has 60+ books comprising an “essential reading list” posted online for a sampling of some of the major texts. Web. <http://mommuseum.org/readers-picks-barnes-and-noble-fundraiser/>

It is this author's assertion that in the same way that Food Studies, Fashion Studies, Gender Studies, and Digital Humanities have found their own degreed course of study, there is ample room to consolidate a degree or certificate program of Mother Studies.

The feminist movement of the 1970s and then that of the 1990s, while exploring motherhood as an academic subject as did Rich in *Of Woman Born* (1976), Ruddick in *Maternal Thinking* (1989), and Rothman in *Recreating Motherhood* (1989), did not result in an embrace within Women's and Gender departments or Feminist Studies as a particular field, although plenty of academics are committed to teaching it. I reference *Teaching Motherhood; a collection of post-secondary courses on mothering/motherhood* (Demeter Press 2011). Also, women have written about the experience of being a mother in the academy as did Mama PhD (2008), and *Mothering in the Academy* by Stitt (2014). Motherhood in the academy is also an ongoing popular topic at annual conferences about mothers, of which there were no fewer than four this year: *Annual Academic M.O.M. Conference* (Museum of Motherhood, CUNY The Graduate Center, NY), *Worn Out; Motherwork in the Age of Austerity* (Sarah Lawrence College, NY), *Maternal Subjectives* (MIRCI in Rome, Italy), and *Motherhood and Culture* (Maynooth University, Ireland). At this point the feminist discourse has boldly divested itself of essentialist theories that once haunted the topic of motherhood. It almost seems at this juncture as though motherhood might be poised for a reexamination within the academy. As Kawah states "What has emerged in the last decade is a body of scholarship that simultaneously insists on the particularity and specificity of motherhood while at the same time rejecting any notion of a fixed or essential aspect of maternal experience, desire, or subjectivity" (972). Why the rise and fall, ebb and flow, but more significantly, inability to situate this vast cultural, sociological, and psychological field of Mother Studies permanently as a field in the academy? O'Reilly has

consistently pushed ahead with attempts to bridge a feminist motherhood and has succeeded in maintaining sovereignty over the field; however, she has not successfully disseminated a distinct field of study that has expanded to a degreed track within multiple institutions. As Kawah corroborates, “For the most part, this effort has *not* been recognized or supported by the scholars, departments, and journals that have the most prestige and influence in academic feminism. Overall, the feminist engagement with motherhood in the last decade has been fragmented” (973). In addition, despite my goals in advocacy within the arts, I hit a dead end when Hollywood approached me as a music performer in the arena of “mom-rock” in the mid 2000’s with the same disheartening proposals for visibility that resulted in now familiar shows like “Housewives of Beverley Hills” and “Rita Rocks,” where one-dimensional characters embark on catfights and household chaos. So I think that it is not enough to approach Mother Studies as something that has obvious import. Rather, it is important to deconstruct some of the barriers to advancement so as better to keep an eye on the obstacles that stand between present-day articulations and the prize: viability, credibility, and legitimization in the academy.

There are currently three main obstacles to Mother Studies in the academy in addition to the ones I have just mentioned: mass, legitimization, and consensus. In direct response to these things I have proposed a journal, utilizing the astute advice of my advisor, Rothman, to directly address these issues. With regard to the first obstacle there are primarily the constraints of time, which we must continue to patiently and diligently observe while syllabi, books, articles, journals, academics, and students continue to emerge and multiply. This is what has arguably been happening over the last thirty years since Rich’s *Of Woman Born*, Ruddick’s *Maternal Thinking* and Rothman’s *ReCreating Motherhood* were published. At this juncture one can easily point to *The Journal of the Motherhood Initiative* (1999); *Studies in the Maternal* (2009);

Fathering; The Journal (2015); *the Encyclopedia of Motherhood* (2011), and now *The Journal of Mother Studies* (2015). The collective mass will hopefully continue to swell with each new course that is introduced, and each new student that is enlivened by the contents of such a class.

With regard to legitimization; this is an obstacle that could easily be solved through university press publishing. While I in no way denigrate the caliber of the existing journals focused on motherhood, I intimately understand the inherent problems with new and emerging genres. As publisher for two cultural publications within the mother-sphere, *The Mom Egg* (2003-2005), and *Mamazina* (2008-2010), I saw music, poems, and prose in their infancy. There were undeveloped, arguably amateurish. They were the primal ramblings of women who had not quite gained their bearings—myself included. Now these women *have* developed their voices. Hundreds of texts have been published at this point, and academic conferences, literary happenings, and motherhood in the political sphere have definitely arrived. Therefore, as part of this *JourMS* project, we will write and submit proposals for university press publication.

Finally, there is the issue of consensus. While I am hesitant to criticize not only the ways in which women thwart each other but also the ways in which academic institutions pit professional against professional, the fact remains that this is a very real problem. As Kay Redfield Jamison writes in her book, *An Unquiet Mind*, “Tenure is the closest thing to a blood sport that universities can offer; it is intensely competitive, all-consuming, exciting, fast, rather brutal, and very male” (124). Competition and survival within the university setting can be frightening. The only antidote I can offer is a reminder that, in order to make women more visible, it is imperative that when sizing up a perceived threat to ego, security, or prestige in academia, it is against the spirit of knowledge in the new age to attempt to constrain inclusion. While I recognize competition as an important part of old patterns of intellectual accessibility,

my argument for using the digital humanities is in direct response to this sort of pattern, as well as my argument for m/otherness, mother-ness perspectives.

I will build and launch *The Journal of Mother Studies* on the DH platform within the Museum of Motherhood, while eliciting partnership with an academic publisher. I do not doubt that it will be forthcoming. However, as Kawash notes, “Motherhood studies as an area of scholarship is on precarious ground: ignored by mainstream academic feminism, fragmented and discontinuous in the academic margins. The fact that neither the university system nor the institutions of academic feminism appear willing to support a scholarly community and a research program that explicitly foregrounds motherhood is discouraging” (996). In her notes on the Museum of Motherhood, of which I was the founder, as perhaps an optimistic paradigm within which to encourage future Mother Studies institutions and as an argument for the ways in which my journal project has been plotted to proceed, she writes, “One positive development is a new *Museum of Motherhood*, a real and virtual social change museum focused on amplifying the voices and experiences of mothers while connecting ‘the cultural family.’” She goes on to list the importance of various social, political, artistic, and activist agencies committing themselves to this growing field and insists that “boundary crossing” is important and essential to its success. She concludes on the following cheery note:

Theorists, scholars, and writers, as well as feminist mothers and activists, have a lot to say to each other, and a lot to learn from each other, about motherhood. Motherhood studies needs the perspective and commitment of feminism as well as the institutional resources that feminism and women’s studies have accumulated over the past four decades. At the same time, feminism cannot possibly hope to remain relevant without acknowledging motherhood in all its

contradictions and complexities. (996)

In this chapter I have defined what Mother Studies is and have described the history of its evolution along with my own position within its trajectory. Mother Studies as a field and as a theory has inherent challenges to face including the fact that it is a relatively new area of academic investigation. It shares some similarities with the rise of the Digital Humanities, an emerging field that explores the intersections of the humanities and computing technology within the academy, as well as Queer Studies, an area of study that deals with sexual orientation and gender identity issues. Both of these fields have many theories around which the fields respectively were created. Therefore, I have identified what might be a significant principle, namely the notion of m/otherness, mother-ness. Because the *JourMS* is built on a digital humanities platform, I am hopeful that ongoing discussion and interactive dialogue will be core elements of this developing and fluid field.

JOURMS.org: A DIGITAL HUMANITIES HYBRID PROJECT

The digital humanities represent a virtual marriage between technology and the rapidly changing academic climate. At a time when budgetary concerns, relevancy, and accessibility are all being questioned within the collegiate environment, some educators recognize the importance of bringing the humanities into the digital age. Kathleen Fitzpatrick is one of those educators. In her book, *Planned Obsolescence*, she reminds scholars of the changing times. “Scholars need to find ways to adapt to [new systems of networked knowledge] or run the risk of becoming increasingly irrelevant to the ways that contemporary culture produces and communicates authority” (13). Fitzpatrick experimented with writing her book in the Media Commons Press¹², and solicited feedback from her colleagues as she wrote. While some DH projects are designed to literally digitize documents for the purposes of making them more widely available, others aspire to revolutionize the way technology informs research and scholarship through data mapping, text mining, and collaborative publishing (as in the case with Fitzpatrick). Journals in particular have been at the forefront of debates in terms of reconciling the theory and praxis of these technological advances. An investigation into the advantages of digital formats will lay the groundwork for the creation of the *Journal for Mother Studies (JourMS)*. It will be built, developed, and maintained using digital humanities methodology, which means it will embrace the following tenets: free and open-access, collaborative technology, and process as part of the product. This situates it specifically as a journal that encodes the values of the digital humanities at least in terms of what aspires to be transparent methodology.

This chapter examines open-access journals while evaluating the sustainability of commercial journals, which limit access to their contents, and create systems of control. These

¹² The Media Commons Press is a place where individuals can experiment with collaborative online publishing. Web. <http://mcpres.media-commons.org/plannedobsolescence/>

information holders maintain themselves in the position of regulating knowledge—something that fundamentally goes against the kinds of knowledge mother scholars must make available to the general public. David Parry argues to exactly that point in his article, “Burn the Boats/Books.” He insists, among other things, that we must “stop publishing in closed systems” (3). Likewise, Jo Guldi insists that public visibility is paramount, and that in order to “thrive in the new order, finding both readers academic and para-academic” is the way forward (5). By including the “para-academic,” Guldi widens the circle of knowledge to move beyond the strata of traditional students and into the realm of the general public. The mother’s movement as an academic initiative is loosely constructed around a group of scholars, artists, activists, and thinkers invested in examining motherhood, mothering, m/otherness, and mother-ness from the experience of it, the practice of it, and its psycho-social implications. But, not every “motherist” falls neatly into the category of professional scholar. Because mothering is a practical endeavor with real world implications, its thought-cans must be as public as possible and as open to discussion and scrutiny as possible. Therefore, open-access is mandatory for the widest dissemination of ideas.

In the e-book, *Hacking The Academy*, edited by Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt, Digital Humanist scholars, take on established journal practices and argue from multiple perspectives about the serious implications of ignoring new systems of knowledge-sharing. A few of those arguments focus on the following points: interactivity is important for engagement; proprietary knowledge is imperialist, and *process* is inseparable from *product*. While I may be taking some liberty with their use of language, the core concepts presented in their texts are clear. The latter point can be argued ethically or empirically. Working backwards from the three points I just identified, let us first examine process: what it means and how it is important.

Simply put, process is the activity of identifying the *making of a thing* as a key component and of equal importance to the *outcome of a thing*. In the global market this makes products obtained through unethical processes, i.e., the poor treatment of people, animals, or environment, no longer viable. In the “knowledge market” this delegitimizes closed systems of leveraging information by senior professors lauding their published reports on the backs of underling researchers who are given no credit. It also highlights the falsity of omitting the significance of process within the greater definitions of knowledge. For example, David M. Berry discusses phenomenology as pointing to the “immediate subjective experience rather than distant objective science: our experience, viewpoint, and understanding as human beings are as important as factual knowledge” (*Understanding Digital Humanities* 3). He goes on to identify the ways in which “process philosophy puts things in the background and focuses on the doing of learning or researching”. Learning itself, the evolution of knowledge, and the process by which we report these things are fluid. David Parry encourages academics to liberate themselves from “the substrate of paper, and finality” (3). We should switch to presenting our ideas in process, showing our work—not just the final product. In the case of a study on mothering and motherhood, or human beings in general, the process becomes paramount with regard to temporality and phase transformation. A journal of Mother Studies built in the digital humanities philosophically requires the inclusion of process as part of its whole. Therefore process journals will be available and regularly updated as part of the project, and discussions that emerged throughout the development of this thesis will be shared via links on the website.

My second point that proprietary knowledge is imperialist is best reflected in the 2012 article by Lisa Spiro, called “This is Why We Fight; defining the values of digital humanities.” Throughout this paper Spiro searches for a value system that might help to define the new and

emerging field of DH. This is something that serves as inspiration for me as I am actively engaged in bringing Mother Studies to the academy. What these two fields have in common are more significant than their differences and help to frame my passionate desire to create the *Journal of Mother Studies* in a digital humanities framework. Spiro asserts that many of the values found in “the humanities; libraries, museums, and cultural heritage organizations; and networked culture” share a commonality. Namely “an aim to advance knowledge, foster innovation, and serve the public” (*Debates in the Digital Humanities, online or PDF* 19). Old systems of knowledge in academia were originally dispersed through hierarchical constructions and disseminated through a “star system” (20). These systems historically were not open to many segments of the population, specifically women. More recently the digital humanities, which, according to Spiro, have blended “Humanities values,” which call for rigor, and specialized knowledge, with “Internet values,” resulting in a hybrid of “collaboration, openness, and experimentation” (23). How might this *experimentation* materialize? My hope is to first liberate and encourage multiple discussions about what might even constitute Mother Studies in the academy via discussion tools like CommentPress¹³. Another goal is to explore how an online, open-access journal that might catalog, curate, and facilitate the dissemination of emerging testimony, research, art, culture, humanities, public health, and the social sciences, which are all actively seeking interpretations of this body of knowledge. How might it be collected, filtered, and shared through the DH lens, and how does this contribute to equanimity, shared culture, and non-imperialist values?

Interactivity is paramount for engagement. Fitzpatrick argues that it is essential to broaden academic conversations and bring them into the mainstream. Her point has to do with

¹³ CommentPress facilitates comments on WordPress themed websites. Web. <http://futureofthebook.org/commentpress/>

the pace and temperament of current learning climates. “Reminding scholars that our very professional existence may depend on communicating not just among ourselves, but with a broader public, so that they understand the *value of academic ways of knowing*” (17). In the sphere of shared knowledge widely available on the internet through multiple sources like YouTube, Twitter, and Blog-o-sphere, call-and-response type behavior is elicited through viewer engagement and open conversation. Users approve, disapprove, share, comment, and generally involve themselves through the process of participation. The *Journal of Mother Studies* will include a host of open-access resources and DH tools that will enhance the information exchange and will also experiment with technology as it develops. Each of these tools is intended to enhance the user experience and to cultivate community around the subject of Mother Studies. The journal itself will link to a Society for Mother Studies (SocMS). This society is intended to act as a launching point for future conferencing (which is already ongoing for the past ten years through the Museum of Motherhood) and to invite other conferences, academics, and organizations to register online, share their syllabi, and promote their work as well. This is aimed at bolstering visibility within the larger community of colleges, individuals seeking information, and academics hoping to define this new field. Users will be directed to engage one another without the mitigation of a hierarchical construction. The journal itself will employ a range of DH tools including, but not limited to: Wordle for users to analyze their article content before posting it on the blog, CommentPress for online editing and feedback, and Anthologize for the purposes of printing and publishing online content. Additionally, the site will be embedded with music, dynamic links, and interactive elements. Solicitation of an editorial board and the launching of the initial online publication of the journal in 2016 will invite student, academic, and para-academic involvement.

Finally, a bit about my platform and process: I began building the journal online on a free WordPress site in February 2015 using the “Responsive” theme option—a free template offered by WordPress. I shared the concept with two colleagues who teach Mother Studies in New York and who are advisory board members for the museum. I texted them as soon as Rothman suggested the idea of a journal for my thesis. I had some trepidation, as I am also a colleague of O’Reilly’s and hesitated to do anything that might be construed as a competing overture—since she has the premier journal. Yet, my New York colleagues were excited about the idea and, after apprising O’Reilly of my plans, I proceeded to build out a template. Research for thematic considerations was conducted online and at the Mina Rees Library. Visual inspiration came from *The Journal of Popular Culture* (print), *Journal of Creative Behavior* (print), and *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* (online and in print). These things will all be documented with links online. I chose reds, whites, and blacks, which are also the colors for the Museum of Motherhood website. In terms of the printed journals, I preferred the smaller journals to the larger ones, approximately 8 1/2 by 5 1/2. Online I drew inspiration from the *Journal of Hybrid Pedagogy*,¹⁴ *The International Breastfeeding Journal*,¹⁵ and the *Journal of Feminist Theory*,¹⁶ the website of which *JourMS* is most closely modeled on.

In terms of focusing the field for the *Journal of Mother Studies*, I borrowed heavily from HERA: humanities education and research.¹⁷ Their definition of “Interdisciplinary Humanities” was most helpful in terms of suggesting a framework for submissions. I do not have coding experience, so I worked with a basic Wordpress template, adding my own artwork, created on my Mac computer using Word.Doc, and public domain images. I used a theme of postage stamps

¹⁴ <http://www.hybridpedagogy.com/articles/journal/>

¹⁵ <http://www.internationalbreastfeedingjournal.com/>

¹⁶ <http://www.womenandperformance.org/>

¹⁷ http://www.h-e-r-a.org/hera_journal.htm

and paper envelopes—insinuating the old-style journals where everything is mailed in hard copy for both submission and review. This was the case with my experience sitting on the board for *JMI*, and I did think it might be freeing to be able to do everything online. Therefore, submissions for *JourMS* will be solicited online through the comment form (available on most Wordpress templates). This is the way the M.O.M. Conference solicits submissions, so I am familiar with the process. I also added a process journal. I believe very strongly in this for four reasons: tracking the development of the site and Mother Studies as well as using the guide for reference in writing this thesis and remembering conversations and correspondence as it developed and informed the work as well as making this material available to other researchers. I have made some of the process journals password protected (for the same reason). Some of the process notes include correspondence between myself and my thesis advisor and intimate notes which I might have made to myself. I am willing to make this available to researchers or others wanting to know more about Mother Studies, but I do not want these materials to be widely available for the merely curious. So, anyone who is interested in accessing the password protected process notes will have to write for permission. Finally, I did apply for a CUNY Advance Grant, which I did not get. I did, happily, receive an e-mail from one of the administrators for the grant saying that she had an academic interest in Mother Studies and would like to be involved in the Editorial Board. The grant would have enabled me to access a coding expert in order to use the CommentPress plug in. I plan on doing this and developing other digital humanities options at a later date when I have team members well-versed in coding. Ultimately, I would also like to build an interactive map so that users can track courses around the world. In the meantime, I will make the site available for feedback using a basic comment form at the bottom of each page.

JourMS will uphold the values of inclusion espoused through Digital Humanities, promote open-access resources, encourage collaboration, and offer community-building opportunities with the broad aim of advancing the field of Mother Studies. The goal of *JourMS* is to help facilitate the creation of a new academic-based journal, while innovating with the latest technology to enhance Mother Studies and to emerge as a pioneer within the interdisciplinary humanities, including mother studies as informed by: the arts, history, culture, the social sciences, women's and gender studies, men's studies, literary studies, anthropology, the folkloric, psychology, and media studies. This is how we will reach the next generation of would-be mothers, scholars, artists, and activists. This is how we will inform them, educate them, and challenge them to have a basic knowledge about the social construction of the world in which we live, and continue to expand on the theories presented here.

CONCLUSION

In December 1986 in an informal coffee shop, Eve Sedgwick, the “founder” of Queer Studies, met with author Michael Lynch “to discuss the possibility of putting out an annual volume of essays in gay and lesbian studies” (Sedgwick 253). She described a room full of “eight or nine people,” the field as it were, was so small in those days that anyone who had published a book was invited to join. For those wanting to legitimize Mother Studies’ scholarship we are waiting to be embraced and accepted within a degreed course of study, a recognized tract, and a field that is legitimized as significant. Until institutions embrace us, we are still outsiders, no different from any outsider.

Sedgwick’s first meeting reminds me of so many gatherings that I’ve hosted or attended through the years. Through it all, I remain utterly convinced of the ultimate success of this path. Therefore, I proceed. To reiterate: Mothers are defined as the individuals performing mothering labor within social constructions of motherhood. Mothering labor is the enactment of birth or caregiving work, which is recognized within a contemporary framework of fluid and varying gender differentiations. This journal (and this field) are organized within the interdisciplinary humanities as defined by the arts, history, culture, the social sciences, women’s and gender studies, literary studies, anthropology, the folkloric, psychology, the digital humanities, and media studies. The *Journal of Mother Studies* will explore interpretations (external and internal) as well as the performance of everyday life from the m/otherness, mother-ness perspective, which is to say the relational/connected/disconnected experience. The mother experience, mother identity, and the ways in which mothering is enacted; socially, culturally, and politically are key to constructing a lens through which we might collectively interpret mothers, motherhood, and mothering. I have utilized the tools and theory from the digital humanities to

build the journal online. Specifically, the journal will empower open-access resources, encourage collaboration, and offer community building with the broad goal of advancing the field of Mother Studies. This push is meant to encourage Mother Studies to exponentially increase in the university setting, where ultimately it must thrive in multiple geographic locations and in a diversity of programs. As of this writing, this will be the first journal in the United States aimed at increasing the visibility and legitimacy of the field of Mother Studies, as is my forthcoming Master's degree of the same name.

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