Journal of the Motherhood Initiative

Social Work, Motherhood, and Mothering: Critical Feminist Perspectives

Spring / Summer 2022
Volume 13, Number 1

Hee-Jeong Yoo, Laura Lewis, Deepy Sur, Dawn Thurman, Erin Kuri, Janis Favel, Christine Walsh, and many more

DEEPY SUR

Challenge Perfectionism: An Interwoven Autoethnographic Discussion of Motherhood

This autoethnography investigates the intersection of motherhood and social work with my experience as a South Asian woman. Rarely do accounts of motherhood from racialized women offer a space to respond to the pressure to be perfect. Motherhood and mothering literature has increasingly incorporated the use of stories, voices, and experiences. Using narrative inquiry, I make sense of my memories with my children, particularly as a social worker in practice. I compare these stories to concepts of perfectionism and motherhood layered with South Asian cultural norms. Using this method enables me to analyze interpersonal tensions and social issues as I explore the complexity of feminist concepts and challenge perfectionism.

Mommy, why is it so hard to grow up? Even if I try my best, I'm scared I won't know enough.

My dear daughter, nobody is perfect.

Is it okay to fail?

Only if you fail perfectly.

I am a mother. A mother to two daughters. I hold many facets to my identity. I am a social worker, a helper, a leader, and a family contributor. I have meaningful mentors, linkages to my culture, academic interests, and a partner who provides mounds of unconditional support. This inquiry and exploration is my own experience as a mother and is written using stories in an effort to make meaning of my experiences within the culture of motherhood. Personal experiences can present a unique vantage point for contributions to social science; moreover, narrative theory explains how stories influence identity, and when we tell stories, we can emphasize lived experience that shapes our character (Hudson 114; Stahlke Wall 3). In social work, we know methods of personal exploration, such as autoethnography, are a unique method to study

social phenomena (Lapadat 590; Stahlke Wall 2). Autoethnography as a method of inquiry allows for "speaking for and with" as a storyteller and main character to emerge as a catalyst for exploration and reflexivity (Boylorn; Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis). As a qualitative form of research, autoethnography is a method that emphasizes insight from interactions with lived experience as well as social and cultural context (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner). In particular, narrative autoethnography inquiry focuses not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives that inform them (Clandinin 44). Using the narrative format can help us access abundant information to give personal stories and events a deeper meaning (Wang and Geale 196). This theory also amplifies the voices of underrepresented populations as their perspectives are not often considered (Wang and Geale 195).

A Mother and a Social Worker

In this work, I recount memories, stories, and personal experience through analysis of my cultural context and the impact on my lived experience. This writing is a critical reflection on how motherhood and my role as a social worker have influenced each other. The term "motherhood" has its origins in patriarchy as a male-defined institution, whereas "mothering" is a female-defined empowering experience (O'Reilly, *Feminist Mothering*). I have found my own experiences of mothering to be cradled softly with the blanket of my social work professional self. In this account, I breathe life into the complexity of mothering in a contemporary world through an intersectional feminist lens. To imagine and view myself as a mother and social worker is to empower myself, to build strength, and to find agency. This required me to manifest an understanding that mothering directly influences my social work practice. Social inequities associated with my gender and race intersect with my life as a mother, which, in turn, shapes my perspectives on mothering. Carole Zufferey and Fiona Buchanan describe how alternative accounts of mothering can challenge normative assumptions and add to the discourse on mothers and mothering.

It was during my first "cookie talk chat" with my seven-year-old daughter at the kitchen table that I reflected on a memory of my mother and my aunts at the table during many family gatherings. This was the norm, the usual background chatter and noise. Then I flashed to a memory of sitting at the table in my own childhood home with my mother and my sisters; this usually focused on advice giving. My mother would comment on our age, and inevitably the conversation would travel to the topic of marriage. Sometimes it was laced with comedy, but only if one of us could find a way to make her laugh or gossip. Other times it became a serious conversation, resulting in someone being offended or hurt. She saw it as her duty, her role as a

mother, to help us organize our lives. We saw it as an imposition. The conversation rarely focused on the things we had learned in school, what our views on equality were, or what we wanted to do with our careers. Without asking, she always knew we were successful. She did in fact care about our success. She also expected us to be perfect at everything we did. As result, she never needed to check on this. It was an absolute expectation. The order in which she ranked the categories were always clear to us. Perfection in school was mandatory, followed by choosing a perfect life partner, someone to marry.

I was always a good daughter. I knew that. I also knew I worked hard to achieve this, sometimes driven by fear and other times driven by obligation. Later, I came to realize that somewhere inside I knew I was also going to be the one to disrupt the home, to alter expectations. As a result, I maintained perfection in every other aspect of life in the hope it would later become my bargaining chip. In my mind, I constructed a good daughter checklist.

My Mother

I have a strong and dynamic mother; I have watched her raise four daughters and no sons. Like many, the experience I had in the culture I grew up with was sometimes laden with sexist traditions, archaic customs, and inherent expectations. Still, I witnessed the emergence of true beauty in my parent's home—the beauty of sisterhood, the meaning of solidarity, and the role of a mother in all of this. Cultural norms offered many opportunities for others to question my parents on the burden of having four daughters. We witnessed many moments of pity, sympathy, and occasional support. A small team of warriors formed in our home. The warriors were freakishly independent, riveting storytellers, and eventual perfectionists.

I watched my mother in her evening routine—dinner, cup of chai, and then watching TV on the couch while knitting. She was an expert at knitting: fast, with precision, and barely looked down. I was always amazed at this. I asked her to teach me, many times. She tried, many times. I could not seem to pick it up. Later in my life, during my lunch hour, I learned to knit from a friend at work. She had placed her hand over mine to guide the pattern, and she smiled when it took me an entire hour to learn the first stitch. When I learned to crochet from the same friend, I shared my beautiful blankets and scarves with my mother. She was proud. Very proud. It didn't matter how I learned but rather that I finally acquired the skill. My mother always wanted a good life for me. She told me this often. She wanted me to have a home, a spouse, and children (hopefully a son). She believed a good wife could have a strong voice and have a powerful presence, but the art of this was in choosing the right spouse.

The perfectionist daughter soon became the perfectionist wife. I nestled into a home and soared into a meaningful career full of promise. I was a social worker long before I became a mother. I poured my heart into this role and believed the world needed me; I put my clients first. It did not take me long to realize that it was in me to overachieve—to compete, to win, and to achieve perfection. Or was it in my blood? Was it taught, injected, and then rehearsed? This continued when it was time to think of a baby.

I think it's time, I am ready, let's have a baby.

Okay, yes, I am ready, let's have a baby.

I hope it's a daughter.

Me too, but don't tell my mother we said that.

Perfectionism

Like all my other adventures, I had plans to conquer motherhood. Unsurprisingly, motherhood brought about the perfectionist within. The shift in my sense of control came as a surprise. The fragility and vulnerability of motherhood are often masked with an insatiable eagerness. From the moment I laid eyes on my children, they owned me. It was as if they had burrowed into the depths of my soul. In that same instant, fear settled in. The anticipation of failure emerged along with the shift from survival mode to a complete and undying desire to create a perfect world.

I have experienced many difficulties that emerge from a complex intersection of my social location and motherhood. I have travelled a long journey of self-exploration. The journey is anchored in a deep discovery of my family; it includes negotiating culture and my personal identity. I had a deep desire to share this journey in some meaningful way with my daughters. I wanted them to understand their relationship to my maternal identity. Not only did I want to be a good mother, but I also associated being a good mother with being a good person. Interested in the experience and ideology of motherhood made me consider this knowledge through a feminist lens and maternal theory. O'Reilly introduces maternal theory in two ways: 1) motherhood as an institution and ideology and 2) mothering as an experience and identity. The author goes on to note that motherhood is a worthy subject of inquiry. This resonates with my experience as a South Asian mother, who was expected to live out distinct norms. The concept of being a "good mother" means completely devoting yourself to another human being. But so too did being a good South Asian daughter, sister, and wife. According to this understanding of motherhood, I was born when my children were born (O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory*).

A feminist theoretical lens allows me to deconstruct the ideologies that shaped my experiences of becoming a mother, in particular paying attention

to the role of perfectionism. A good mother is to never get angry and is always be composed and not have an identity outside her being a mother (O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory*). My lived experience hears this as perfectionism. A sense of cultural divisiveness emerged for me. I remember being bombarded by stereotypes and images of motherhood. She is married, able bodied, in the kitchen, and I also found myself thinking that if the mother were perfect, she would also be white. Despite my efforts to reject patriarchal views of motherhood, the course of my decisions still supported these views. I found myself pushing against subjugating, crushing forces. From the moment I carried a child inside of me, I negotiated within the confines of my cultural discourse and my desire to be disruptive. I wanted a daughter, desperately. A dominant cultural norm tried to teach me I wanted a son. I found myself mustering a new kind of strength—a fierceness laced with multiple desires and bursting ambition.

Mommy, how do you know everything? It's like you always know the answer. Do you always know what is going to happen?

I don't always know what is going to happen, and I don't always know the answer, but I will always try to be honest. When I don't know, I will try to find the answer.

Did you know you were going to have a daughter?

I didn't know, but in my heart, I felt it.

After me, did you want a son?

I wanted more of you.

Why?

You are brilliant and radiant. Why wouldn't I want more of that? My star, there is power in our voice together, imagine the power from three.

Mommy, I don't have to imagine. You always know what is going to happen.

I wondered if my mother had the same experiences as me. I never asked. I have concluded that my mother wore a motherhood camouflage. A cloak if you will, framed by bravery, but masking the chaos and complexity of South Asian expectations. The cloak made it immensely difficult to learn from her experiences of being a mother. Her hardships remained invisible to me, but I always knew what her expectations were. A South Asian mother could master the art of running the house, cooking, cleaning, and teaching while raising a perfectly behaved daughter. This same South Asian mother could enhance her mastery as the family grew with more children. Aspects of doubts, anger or intense sadness were deemed deviant or weak. My mother told me she never felt angry, or so she said. There was an extended family to raise her children with her. She remarked that ambivalence was to be concealed. At times it meant faking it or building the bridge as you walked across it, with little time for pause and reflection. You just walk, forget ahead. You walk with your head held high

wearing your motherhood cloak. As a result, your power, self-esteem, and worth would emerge. You would become perfect she said.

Gordon Flett and colleagues write about three main forms of perfectionism: self-oriented; other-oriented; and self-prescribed (250). The self-oriented perfectionist laid out unrealistic expectations of achievement; I did this and somehow managed to make plans to meet my high standards. Other-oriented perfectionists set standards for others to adhere to (Flett et al. 250); I didn't really ascribe to this practice. Perhaps the most relevant for me is the socially self-prescribed perfectionist. Perfectionism has been linked to negative outcomes, such as feelings of failure, guilt, and shame (Flett et al. 250; Hewitt and Flett 467). I can and have been motivated by the fear of disappointing others. The images of a good mother persist even in my role as a social worker as well as in public policy and the media. When the social worker in me speaks to the mother, I ask her to set unrealistic standards and not forget that cultural traditions matter. I tell myself this is goal setting. I had tried to perform new baby blessings, host at our home, always welcome visitors; for me only total success was an option. The possibility that perfectionism has both personal and social components suggested to me that the perfectionistic behaviour also started to shift from being self-directed to being directed towards my daughter.

Interestingly, perfectionism doesn't allow practice rounds or opportunities for improvement. It is either perfect, or it isn't. When I became a mother, acknowledging the role of perfectionism became increasingly important. I worried my fight for perfection would conflict with the unpredictability of motherhood. When I view myself as mother through a feminist lens, I know it is culturally constructed and wonder what causes it to be this way. Yet before my eyes, it transforms and morphs because of the changing world around me. Motherhood has responded to what has happened in culture over time. To be a mother today, I know is fundamentally different than what it was for my mother. Adrienne Rich has critiqued the motherhood myth as influential social construct in Western society. Motherhood has been described as natural and instinctive (DiQuinzio) and even the expectation of intensive mothering (Douglas and Michaels). Feminist critiques of the good mother concept highlight the social construct and pressures placed on women to perform to a particular standard, and here is where the perfectionism emerges for me.

Self-Acceptance

I also started to consider self-acceptance and self-empathy. I had embraced her, my daughter, and then another. I had also used my experience with her to relate to my clients on deeper levels. I took time for myself to learn more, but only because it made me a better mother and a better social worker. When most people think of empathy, they think of the concept with others. I also

looked at this as self-knowledge—an awareness of myself—and an ability to engage in empathy towards myself to gain a deeper understanding. Rachael Crowder notes that mindfulness and feminism have similar approaches, particularly in the fluidity of self and compassion (26). Later I would later learn the crucial role self-empathy would play in contending perfectionism.

The union of robust clinical practice as a social worker coupled with motherhood helped remind me to evaluate my world differently. To do this, I first evaluated the space perfectionism took up. Frankly, I believed motherhood entailed a number of stereotypical views, but I hoped it would be inconsequential so long as I held steadfast to my social work skills. For example, I learned about feminist mothering, whereby I could embrace a liberated style of mothering and reject the notion that childrearing should be left to mothers within the domestic realm of home (Zufferey and Buchanan). As a feminist, I reminded myself that inadequacies were measured against social arbitrary standards. As a social worker, I understand and value the use of empathy in my practice. I used the same concepts to reflect on my own experiences, memories, and disturbances for the purposes of self-empathy. I explored my unique experience of mothering by reflecting and re-reflecting often to notice any maternal sensitivity and varied representations of myself as mother. Mothering indeed requires sacrifices to put childrearing first, but I swiftly learned to sidestep the idea that a good mother was one who also sacrificed herself as a person. It is not about being a selfish mother, it is about seeing, understanding, and acknowledging the barriers that I had to face as a woman and the assumptions of gender and race that I encountered. I told myself that feminism brings us together, and perfectionism drives us further apart. Through feminism, I have come to understand the "never good enough" problem. Feminism taught me motherhood support was out there, and social work taught me I wasn't a terrible person when I didn't succeed.

Feminist theory analyzes gender inequalities through the intersection of gender, race, and class. A feminist lens then allows us to examine relationships of power. Understanding a women's oppression, particularly in a South Asian context, became increasingly more important to me, first as a social worker and then as a mother. Acknowledging the impact of culture and the influence of gender roles as a Canadian-born South Asian woman provided an important lens for my experience of perfectionism. Feminist researchers have noted the importance of contextual factors, including culture, when looking at systemic oppressions, such as sexism (Singh and Hays). My interpersonal relationships with myself, family, and my daughters continue to be bound by culture and gender, as I often negotiated the value of cultural approval against my personal desires. My South Asian worldview has emphasized personal control, a sense of individual dignity, and balancing interpersonal relationships.

Paying Closer Attention

Truthfully, I never expected the threat of perfectionism and the negative role it would play in my world. Motherhood and perfectionism became a rather toxic mix. With a desire to become more empathic with myself, I began to pay closer attention. I now tell my kids that it is okay to fail sometimes if you try your best. Yet I have forgotten to tell them stories of my own failures. I have said it's okay to not be perfect, but I have not shared stories of imperfection. In the last few years, I have been aware that I need to share with them that being overly consumed with being perfect can be at the expense of your own mental health and your relationship with yourself. It isn't that I think I am perfect. It isn't even that I want to be perfect; it is more that I feel compelled to do things well in every single area of my life. To perform with perfection was an important part of motherhood.

When I began to share my world with two daughters, it became impossible to perform with perfection. Perfectionism had met its match. As a social worker, I have witnessed the complicated relationship between feminism and motherhood. I have had to reflect on where mothering is exactly situated within my personal values. Many feminists have argued that the patriarchal notion of motherhood is the source of oppression and not the experience of mothering. O'Reilly notes contending views of motherhood. The nurturing good mother, as opposed to the irresponsible bad mother, has been socially constructed and the implications have led to political and social stereotypes (*Feminist Mothering*). Practicing feminist mothering has become a disruptive way of life that allows me to reject sexist values that transcend generations (*Feminist Mothering*). Reflecting on employment, caregiving, and the concept of devotion to children versus to myself has become increasingly important. For me, the way motherhood intersects with my race and ethnicity has added another dimension. I know ideas about mothering impact all women, including those without children. My struggle became clear, and sometimes it brought an impending feeling of doom. I knew that in my home, we could teach our daughters something important. We could give them access to education and encourage them to strive to break boundaries. We planned to help them hurdle barriers and achieve the impossible. I reminded them they could have anything a son could have. Even still, I worried that through the threads of perfectionism, I would only teach them this by promoting professional progression as a marker of success.

Self-Empathy

I wanted to make a shift and to pivot slightly away from perfectionism. To learn this, I didn't have to look very far. Social work has taught me much by way of theory, history, and practice. Perhaps the richest learning has come from the clinical relationships and interactions I have been trusted with. First, women of all ages have allowed me to bear witness to their creativity. Mothers think outside the box. Mothers juggle, multitask, and innovate. Second, our resilience lives within our flexibility. We can be flexible to not only survive and endure but also succeed. Third, passion is not just a characteristic; it is a strength. I have seen women rise from the depths of heartache to embrace their inner passion. I understand inner passion to be marked by rejecting stereotypical expectations of good mothering and instead embracing those who find their own liberating way of mothering that is not just practical but also notes individual experiences and lessons about self-empowerment. I have looked into the eyes of women who have shared their vulnerabilities and taught me about striking a balance between negotiation and survival. Fourth, and last, self-love is truly remarkable. Humans can cultivate kindness, understanding, and compassion. Turning this inwards is a necessary ingredient in self-empathy. The practice of mindfulness, awareness, and gratitude have taught me about reflection and critical consciousness. Mindfulness is a non-judgmental approach, whereas perfectionism is self-critical. Self-empathy opens a space for exploring imperfection safely. It allows you to focus on connections, interactions, and the power of acceptance. Permission to live out and learn from mistakes became a way for me to accept the range of feelings. It was important to use self-empathy to evaluate the internalization and integration of my mistakes in a new relationship with my identity. Some literature points to the need for women to exercise self-compassion in order to free themselves from patriarchal concepts; in addition, self-compassion scales have been readily available for evaluating compassion (Neff and Beretvas 83). Some research calls for self-compassion and the benefits of integrating self-compassion within the profession of social work. Conceptual approaches include addressing burnout and attitude (Iacono 455). Although my interests started with the focus on the concept of self-compassion, I found that the concept of empathy became more relevant and personal. I have worked in healthcare for the majority of my career. Empathy in healthcare has several qualities that are relational, transactional, and instrumental in nature. Empathy as a practice has given me the ability to understand and communicate understanding of another person's perspective (Meneses and Larkin 5; Riess 76). I began to think about the ability to understand and communicate my own perspective to others, to my family, and to my children. I viewed this as self-empathy and made it a paramount priority.

When I began to embrace self-empathy, I grew to also embrace sisterhood and the collective empowerment affiliated. Sharing stories with my daughters about the many successful individuals in their lives shifted to sharing stories about the many versions of their individual successes. I also began to talk frequently about the distinct role of a mother in a child's life in their lives. Hilary Levey Friedman argues that there exists an underlying assumption in society that children require consistent nurturing by a primary caretaker, particularly a mother (300). Mothers are required to always find copious amounts of energy for their children. Since Friedman reminds us that intensive mothering is the dominant ideology describing mothers as central to childrearing and that all of a mother's energy should be invested into it, I began to explore what the ideology of intensive mothering has done to me. In my world, who has promoted this belief system? In my culture, how has it been sustained?

A great amount of energy is invested into being a mother. It is necessary to acknowledge raising children is an act of mothering; however, mothering in itself has a distinct identity of its own. To say this out loud is liberating. Mothers, fathers, children, families, individuals, and sacred communities are all pertinent parts of the fabric of our society. I started weaving these sentiments into my interactions with my daughters. It was then magnified by our family experiences. Caregiving in our home has shifted over time, unexpectedly. My spouse stayed home with my daughters for a long time while his career evolved in a new direction. As a result, the conversations about the role of a mother shifted again, especially when led by their father, who focused on their uniqueness and strength.

Mommy, when you were little, what did you want to be?

I wanted to do many things; I was a little explorer.

Happy with this answer, she turned to her father. "Baba, what about you?"

Hmm, I changed my mind often. I really wanted to be a journalist or a teacher. Sometimes I wasn't so sure.

"Baba, did you know you wanted to be a mom?" she giggled. "I mean while mommy is at work?"

"She is always your mommy, even when she is at work."

"I know. But how does somebody know if they want to be a mommy?"

Before I can answer this, he does. "You can be whatever you want, and anything you do is important."

Mothers are often considered the ideal or preferred caretakers of children within a patriarchal society (Friedman 300). Instead, I attempted to shift this socially constructed belief to focus on a sense of family responsibility. I now try to make it even simpler. I have shifted from family responsibility to a sense

of love. Just because I love motherhood does not mean I want to lose sight of other things. Many feminist writers now call for research and inquiry that begins with one's own experience (Zibricky 39). The institution of motherhood, as well as its discussion, is not new. The social construction of motherhood has been talked about in many social realms for decades. Motherhood as a patriarchal construction has often given rise to gender discrimination and socially defined roles, resulting in mothering being considered inferior to other jobs (Zibricky 40). Mothering as part of the construct of motherhood has been shaped by my South Asian roots. South Asian mothering is different than western notions of motherhood (Guignard 267). My mother played a role in shaping my identity and recognized and acknowledged the role she played. She was particularly invested in demonstrating that she could teach me about the world, and she saw her influence on helping me be the best version of myself. The bond between her and me has made me wonder about adult attachment and perfectionism, particularly in my identity formation. In a recent study of mothers between the age of twenty-two and forty that investigated parental identity in the form of commitment and in-depth exploration and traits that determine quality of family life (e.g., romantic adult attachment and perfectionism), one of the results found that mothers with attachment avoidance also scored high on socially prescribed perfectionism (Piotrowski 62). Mothers in this study felt they needed to be flawless; they scored high on self-oriented perfectionism for wanting to be the perfect mother to their children (Piotrowski 62). For my mother, the transition to parenthood was life changing, especially as a seventeen-year-old newly married immigrant. As a social worker, I understand that although people who have become parents often experience positive changes, social determinants can also increase the risk of maladjustment, including mental health issues or low satisfaction with life. It is not unreasonable for me to suggest that my parental identity could be better understood by the formation of my mother's. Now, not only do I want my daughters to understand the role we play in shaping each other's identities, but I also want to build strong foundations of self-love, respect, and collective pride with other humans. I hope this path will lead them to a deep understanding of their strengths.

We can learn from who we are and even who we fail to become. I have learned to reflect on my views and attitudes towards my clients' mothering. Within my failures resides the desire to connect to my value. I still think about the words perfect and good often; however, now I think more about being plentiful.

Mommy, why is it so hard to grow up? Even if I try my best, I am scared I won't know enough.

My dear daughter, you are enough. You are always enough.

Works Cited

Boylorn, R.M. "'Sit with Your Legs Closed!' And Other Sayin's from My Childhood." *Handbook of Autoethnography*, edited by Stacy Linn Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis, Left Coast Press, Inc, 2013, pp. 173-85.

Clandinin, D. Jean. "Narrative Inquiry: A Methodology for Studying Lived Experience." *Research Studies in Music Education*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2006, pp. 44-54.

Crowder, Rachael. "Mindfulness Based Feminist Therapy: The Intermingling Edges of Self-Compassion and Social Justice." *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, vol. 35, no. 1-2, 2016, pp. 24-40.

DiQuinzio, Patrice. *The Impossibility of Motherhood: Feminism, Individualism and the Problem of Mothering*. Taylor and Francis, 2013.

Douglas, Susan J., and Meredith W. Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*. Free Press, 2004.

Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol 12, 2010, No 1, The KWALON Experiment: Discussions on Qualitative Data Analysis Software by Developers and Users.

Flett, Gordon L. et al. "Perfectionism and Binge Drinking in Canadian Students Making the Transition to University." *Journal of American College Health*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2008, pp. 249-56.

Friedman, Hilary Levey. "Intensive Mothering: The Cultural Contradictions of Modern Motherhood." *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2016, pp. 299-301.

Guignard, Florence Pasche. "Book Review: Jasjit K. Sangha and Tahira Gonsalves (Eds), South Asian Mothering: Negotiating Culture, Family and Selfhood." *South Asia Research*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2013, pp. 265-68.

Hewitt, Paul L., and Gordon L. Flett. "Perfectionism in the Self and Social Contexts: Conceptualization, Assessment, and Association with Psychopathology." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1991, pp. 456-70.

Holman Jones, Stacy Linn, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis. *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Left Coast Press, Inc, 2013.

Hudson, Nancie. "When Family Narratives Conflict: An Autoethnography of My Mother's Secrets." *Journal of Family Communication*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2015, pp. 113-29.

Iacono, Gio. "A Call for Self-Compassion in Social Work Education." *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, vol. 37, no. 5, 2017, pp. 454-76.

Lapadat, Judith C. "Ethics in Autoethnography and Collaborative Auto-

ethnography." *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 8, 2017, pp. 589-603.
Meneses, Rita W., and Michael Larkin. "The Experience of Empathy: Intuitive, Sympathetic, and Intellectual Aspects of Social Understanding." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2017, pp. 3-32.
Neff, Kristin D., and S. Natasha Beretvas. "The Role of Self-Compassion in Romantic Relationships." *Self and Identity*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2013, pp. 78-98.
O'Reilly, Andrea, editor. *Feminist Mothering*. State University of New York Press, 2008.
O'Reilly, Andrea, editor. *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*. 2nd ed. Demeter Press, 2021.
Piotrowski, Konrad. "How Good It Would Be to Turn Back Time: Adult Attachment and Perfectionism in Mothers and Their Relationships with the Processes of Parental Identity Formation." *Psychologica Belgica*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2020, p. 55.
Riess, Helen. "The Science of Empathy." *Journal of Patient Experience*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. 74-77.
Singh, Anneliese A., and Danica G. Hays. "Feminist Group Counseling with South Asian Women Who Have Survived Intimate Partner Violence." *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2008, pp. 84-102.
Stahlke Wall, Sarah. "Toward a Moderate Autoethnography." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2016), pp. 1-9.
Wang, Carol Chunfeng, and Sara Kathleen Geale. "The Power of Story: Narrative Inquiry as a Methodology in Nursing Research." *International Journal of Nursing Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2015, pp. 195-98.
Zibricky, Dawn. "New Knowledge About Motherhood: An Autoethnography on Raising a Disabled Child." *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 20, np. 1, 2014, pp. 39-47.
Zufferey, Carole, and Fiona Buchanan, editors. *Intersections of Mothering: Feminist Accounts*. Routledge, 2020.