“The coverage in these essays is comprehensive and impressively diverse. They prove very useful to other academic mothers (and, perhaps, fathers) who feel alone and need confirmation that the problem is not personal but cultural and structural.”

Heather Hewett, State University of New York, New Paltz

Featuring forthright testimonials by women who are or have been mothers as undergraduates, graduate students, academic staff, administrators, and professors, *Mothers in Academia* intimately portrays the experiences of women at various stages of motherhood while theoretically and empirically considering the conditions of working motherhood as academic life has become more laborious. As higher learning institutions have moved toward more corporate-based models of teaching, immense structural and cultural changes have transformed women’s academic lives and, by extension, their families. Hoping to push reform as well as build recognition and a sense of community, this collection offers potential solutions for integrating female scholars more wholly into academic life. Essays also reveal the often stark differences between women’s encounters with the academy and the disparities among various ranks of women working in academia. Contributors—including many women of color—call attention to tokenism, scarce valuable networks, and the persistent burden to prove academic credentials. They also explore gendered parenting within the contexts of colonialism, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, ageism, and heterosexism.

“Deftly unpacks complex issues, emotions, and professional questions.”

Victoria Rosner, Columbia University

**Mari Castañeda** is an associate professor in the Department of Communication and the director of diversity advancement for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is the coeditor of *Soap Operas and Telenovelas in the Digital Age: Global Industries and New Audiences*.

**Kirsten Isgro** is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the State University of New York, Plattsburgh. She has published essays in *Women and Children First: Feminism, Rhetoric, and Public Policy*, *Fundamentalisms and the Media*, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies*, and *Feminist Media Studies*.

Columbia University Press
New York
cup.columbia.edu
Printed in the U.S.A.
Cover Design & Illustrations by Martin N. Hinze
Mothers in Academia

Edited by
Mari Castañeda and Kirsten Isgro
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction:
Speaking Truth to Power to Change the Ivory Tower 1
Marí Castañeda and Kirsten Isgro

PART I WORKING/LEARNING IN THE ACADEMY WHILE WORKING/LEARNING AS A MOM 15

1. How We Learned to Stop Worrying and to Enjoy Having It All 17
Michelle Kuhl, Michelle Mouton, Margaret Hostetler, Druscilla Scribner,
Tracy Slagter, and Orlee Hauser

2. Academia or Bust: Feeding the Hungry Mouths of the University,
Babies, and Ourselves 27
Larissa M. Mercado-López

3. Diverse Academic Support for an Employee, Mother, and Nontraditional Student 37
Wendy K. Wilde

4. Breaking the Glass Ceiling While Being a Mother: Parenting,
Teaching, Research, and Administration 46
Kim Powell

5. To Tell or Not to Tell: Single Motherhood and the Academic Job Market 57
Virginia L. Lewis

6. Class, Race, and Motherhood: Raising Children of Color in a Space of Privilege 66
Irene Mata
**PART II  UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES AND MOMENTOUS REVELATIONS  79**

7. Four Kids and a Dissertation: Queering the Balance Between Family and Academia  81  
   *Vanessa Adel*

8. “Tía María de la Maternity Leave”: Reflections on Race, Class, and the Natural-Birth Experience  92  
   *Susana L. Gallardo*

9. Threads That Bind: A *Testimonio* to Puerto Rican Working Mothers  100  
   *Maura I. Toro-Morn*

10. Parenting Within the Nexus of Race, Class, and Gender Oppression in Graduate School at a Historically Black College/University  111  
    *Olivia Perlow*

11. *Sobreviviendo* (and Thriving) in the Academy: My Tías’ Counterconsejos and Advice  123  
    *J. Estrella Torrez*

12. Revolving Doors: Mother-Woman Rhythms in Academic Spaces  137  
    *Allia A. Matta*

**PART III  CREATING MORE PARENT-FRIENDLY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING  149**

    *Gilda Baeza Ortego*

14. Reimagining the Fairytale of Motherhood in the Academy  160  
    *Barbara A. W. Eversole, Darlene M. Hantzis, and Mandy A. Reid*

15. Tales from the Tenure Track: The Necessity of Social Support in Balancing the Challenges of Tenure and Motherhood  170  
    *Sandra L. French and Lisa Baker-Webster*

    *Summer R. Cunningham*

17. Making It Work: Success Strategies for Graduate Student Mothers  191  
    *Erynn Masi de Casanova and Tamara Mose Brown*
18. Academic Mothers on Leave (but on the Clock), on the Line (and off the Record): Toward Improving Parental-Leave Policies and Practices 200
   Colleen S. Conley and Devin C. Carey

19. Supporting Academic Mothers: Creating a Work Environment with Choices 213
   Brenda K. Bushouse

   Epilogue: Final Reflections 227
   Mari Castañeda and Kirsten Isgro

References 231
List of Contributors 257
Index 261
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, we thank our immediate and extended families, without whose love and support this project and our lives as mothers in academia would not be possible. In addition, we thank the many feminist activists-scholars who have paved the way for us to produce scholarship, teach classes, and theorize motherhood in the flesh. Without the work of these women—many of whom are cited in the forthcoming chapters—the very concepts of mothering as a political, emotional, and personal act would be decidedly undertheorized. We are grateful to be part of a growing body of literature that has collectively generated and informed how we think and rethink our roles as parents, teachers, citizens, and intellectuals. We thank the amazing contributors to this volume for their thoughtful efforts to make their personal stories public as part of that legacy. We also thank the numerous other women who shared their stories as mothers in the academy, but who were not able to be part of this final publication due to limited space.

As with any edited anthology, there is a long list of people who made this book possible. We thank the peer reviewers, staff, and editors (Jennifer Perillo and Stephen Wesley) at Columbia University Press for their insightful and productive feedback; Annie Barva for the copyediting; the University of Massachusetts–Amherst and Five Colleges community, especially the Department of Communication; the Department of Communication at the State University of New York–Plattsburgh, especially Shakuntala Rao; Bohyeong Kim for research assistance; the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies and the Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambios Social for accepting conference presentations on the topic; and a large network of extended family and friends who provided feedback and support throughout the process of editing the book.