MOTHERING: RECLAIMING FEMININE VOICE

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"Those who [support/]study women, but ignore motherhood, do so at some peril, for... it permeates culture, society, and politics. Although motherhood is both powerful and pervasive, its construction and implications for women have been little studied"
(Buchanan, 2013, p. 116)

Agenda

1. How I came to my study
2. Study Design
3. Study Findings
4. Relevance and Implications

Me-Search

"Your Family Will
Fall Apart at the seams"

Mother   Wife

PhD Student   Practice Leader

Private Practice   Professor

My Research

WORDS FROM WORKING MOTHERS

Initial Research Questions: Phenomenological

'What does mindfulness mean to working mothers? In what ways might a mindfulness practice help women navigate their role as a working mother with young children?'

'How do working women think about the educators who help raise their children? What can we learn from them?'

SUB-QUESTION AROSE...

4 Great Awakenings and Motherhood

1. American Revolution 1730-1800- Equality of opportunity (not income)
2. Fossil Fuels and Energy Sources – 1800-1900 increased wealth inequality
3. Electricity and Cars 1900-1060 – urbanization, changing work places, split between rich/poor
4. Technology 1960-present – simultaneous rise in religious fundamentalism and rapid advancements for women …social trends trail this economic trend

Reflection

- *How do you view working mothers?*
- *How does public perception of working mothers shape your work and life?*
- *How might you work more effectively with working mothers to effect better policy?*

Today: Working Women by the Numbers

Working Women	1976	2009
Child under 3	27.6%	64.4%
Children 3-5	36.8%	69.7%
School Age	39%	80%

% of Educators	% of Health Workers
72%	68%

(Ferrao, 2010; Gov't of Canada, 2015)

Social Constructionism

- *Pivotal role society (e.g. language) plays in forming and shaping identities* (Gergen, 2009)
  - *E.g. how we talk about and discuss people/systems*

- *Silent social forces largely responsible for injustices/inequalities in woman's lives* (Hays, 1996; Wendell, 1990)

Social Constructions of the Ideal Mother

www.newyorker.com

Social Constructions

1. An ideal mother assumes primary and **intensive parenting** responsibility

2. An ideal mother is a stay-at-home mother

(Liss, Schiffrin, Mackinstoch, Miles-McLean, & Erchull, 2013)

Intensive Parenting

1. *Women are inherently better at parenting*

2. *Parenting should be fulfilling*

3. *Parents must cognitively stimulated children*

4. *Mothering is difficult*

5. *Parents should prioritize children's needs*

(Liss, Schiffrin, Mackinstoch, Miles-McLean, & Erchull, 2013)

Cultural Realities

1. Abandon self-care to reconcile personal/economic ambitions with societal expectations *(Guendouzi, 2006)*

2. Viewed as poor employees **and** second-rate mothers *(Shaw, 2011; Stone & Ackerly Hernandez, 2013)*

3. Criticized if they chose to stay home or opt to not have children *(Huizinga, 2013; Shaw, 2011)*

Continued:

4. Associated with maternal depression

5. Disconnected fathers/low rates of parental leave

6. Relatively low community support resulting in the 'Second Shift'

7. Fewer women in top leadership positions

8. Poorly funded and available ECEC

Berdahl & Moon, 2013; Briar, 2005; Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Canadian council on Learning, 2006; Jones, 2012; Tarr-Whelan, 2009)

Name, Age	Children	Work Status	Marital Status	Mindfulness Practice
Sally, 31	19 m; pregnant	F/T Social Service	Married	5-30 min/d for 25 years
Loja, 48	Son 11 Daughter 13	F/T equivalent Social Service	Divorced and Remarried	5-60 min/d for 36 years
Sonyia, 40	Son 7 Daughter 4	Fulltime academia	Married	10-45/d for 10 years
Alicia, 41	Daughter 7 and 4	Fulltime in HC	Married	5-60 min/d for 15 years
Joanne, 40	Son 7 Daughter 5	4 days/week HC	Married	20 min/d for 10 years
Nina, 39	Twin girls 6.5	4 days in education	Married	20-60 min/d for 4 years
Siobhan, 39	Daughters 8 & 5	4 days in HC	Married	15-20 min/d for 15 years

PARTICIPANTS

Methods: Body Mapping

"…using drawing, painting or other art-based techniques to visually represent aspects of people's lives, their bodies and the world they live in. Body mapping is a way of telling stories, much like totems that contain symbols with different meanings, but whose significance can only be understood in relation to the creator's overall story and experience"

- Includes Interviews about the body map *(Gastaldo et al., 2010, p. 5)*

Body Mapping

- *Originated in Africa to document life with AIDS*

- *'Manualized' by Solomon (2008) and Gastaldo, Magalhaes, Carrasco, & Davy (2010)*

- *Primacy of the lived body*

Mapping Sessions

- *Asked to respond visually to pre-determined questions*
- *Focus Group/Alone*
- *Range of 1.5 - 4 hours*
- *Various aesthetic material*
- *1-3 sessions*

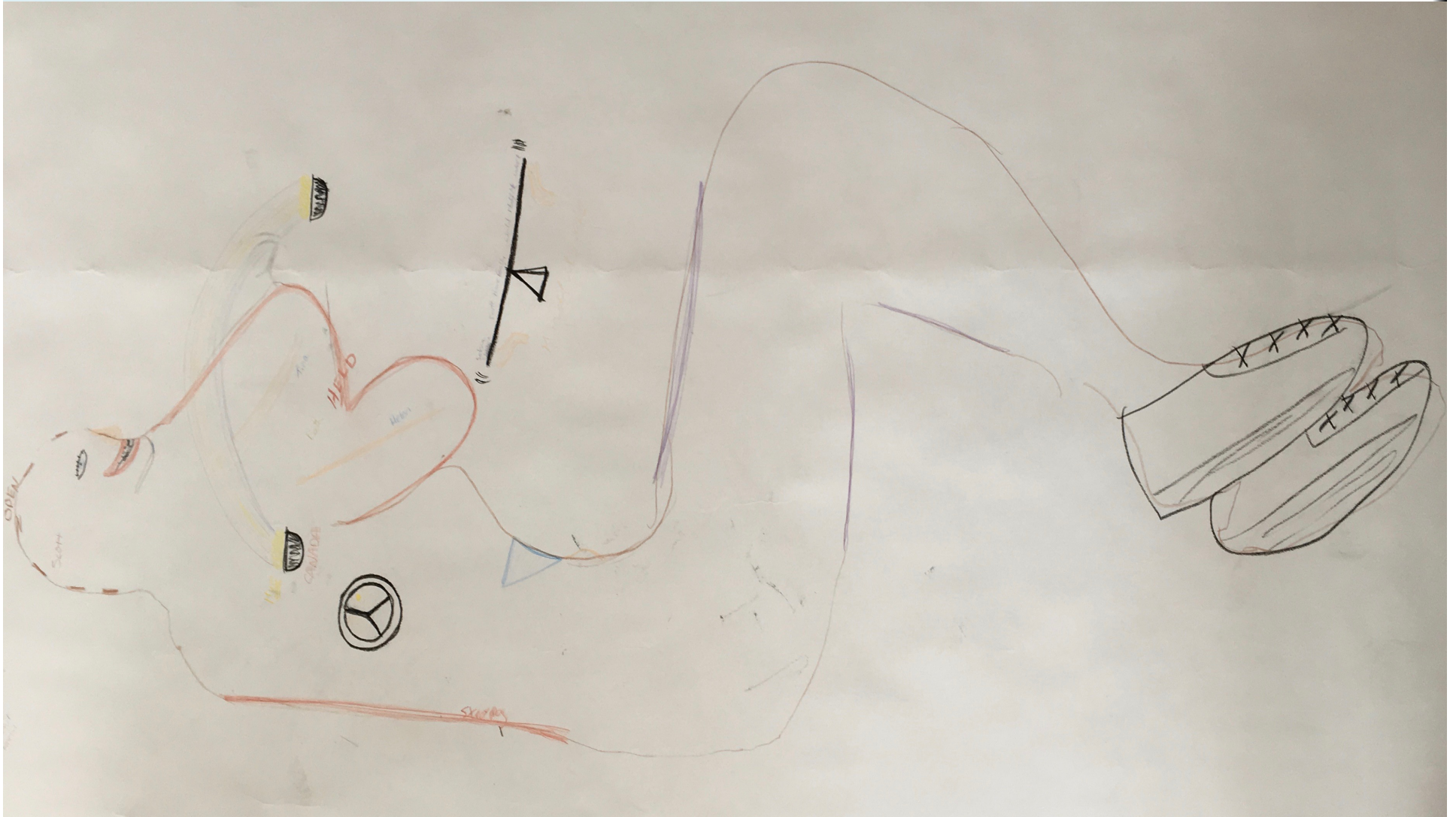*1. Create a personal slogan about were you receive strength as a working mother.*

Visual Analysis

Rose (2012) and Gubrium, (2013)

1. *Composition – how objects are spaced and placed on a map*

2. *Semiology - the study of symbols and their meanings*

3. *Discourse – interpreting how the world is understood and how things are done in it*
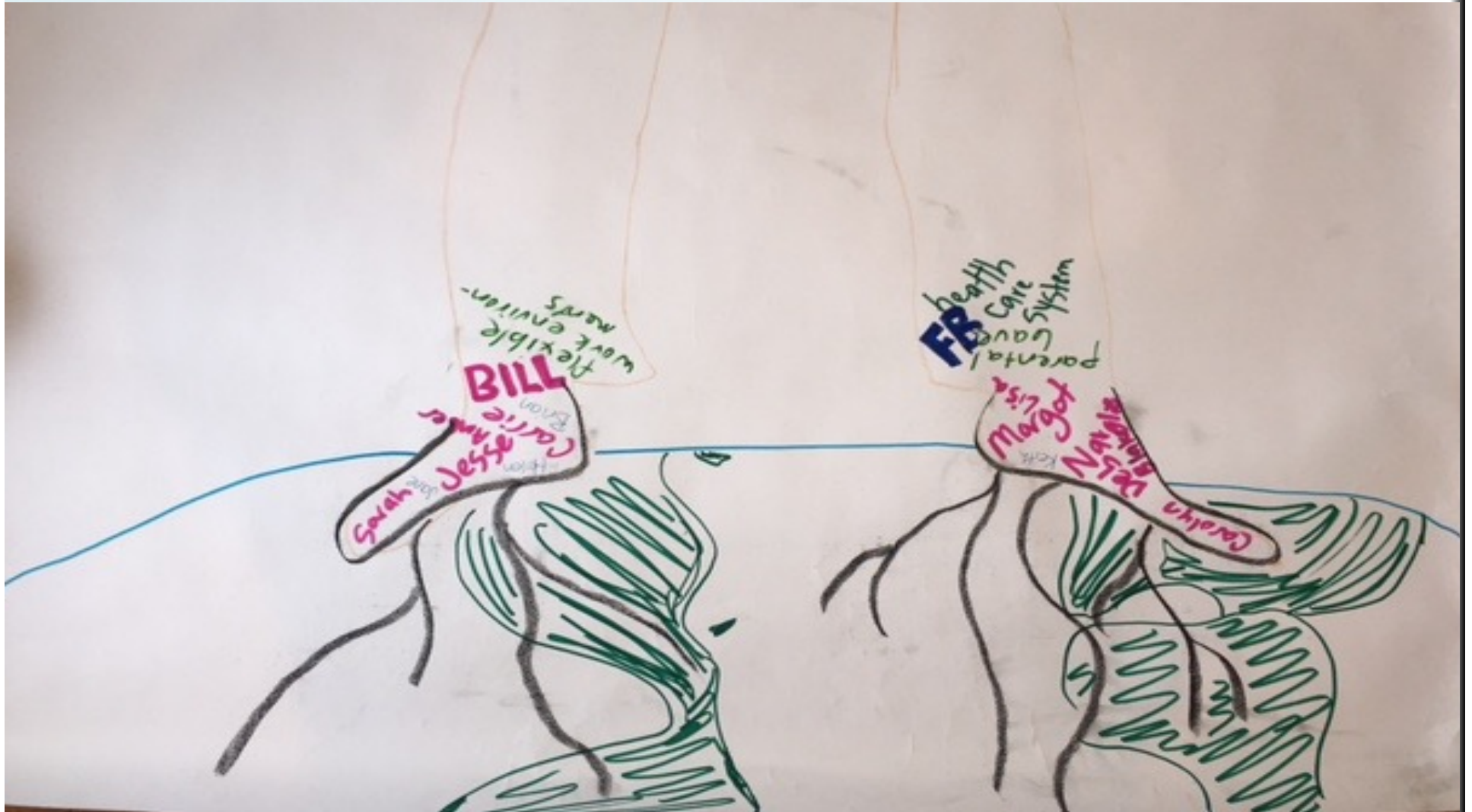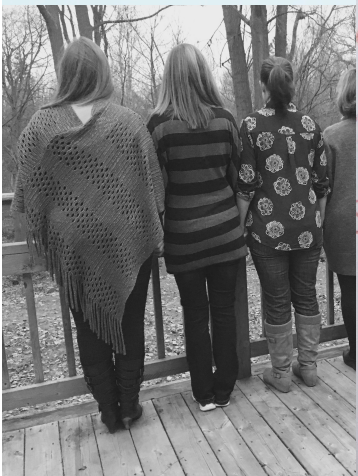
Composition

Composition

Semiology
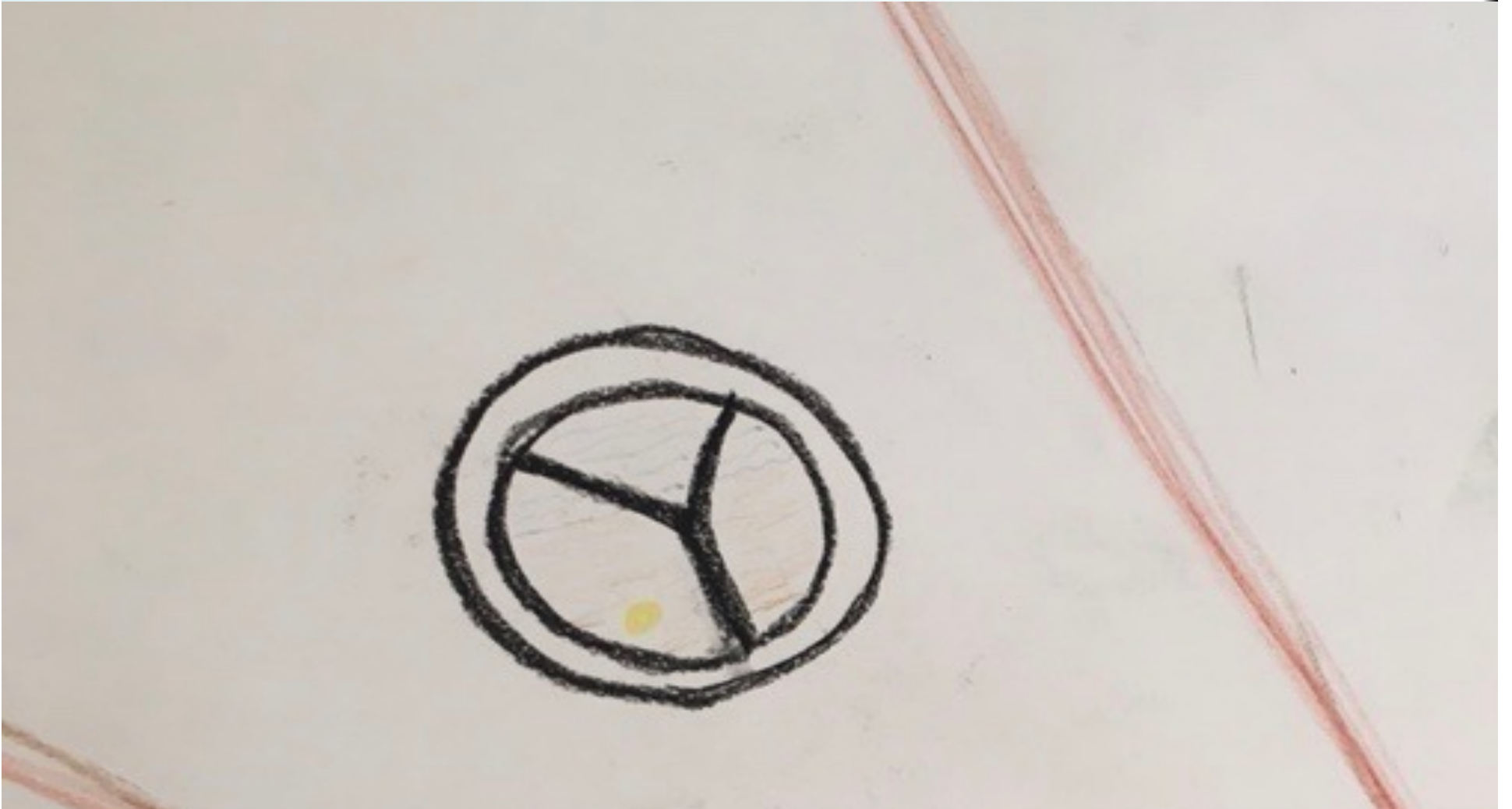
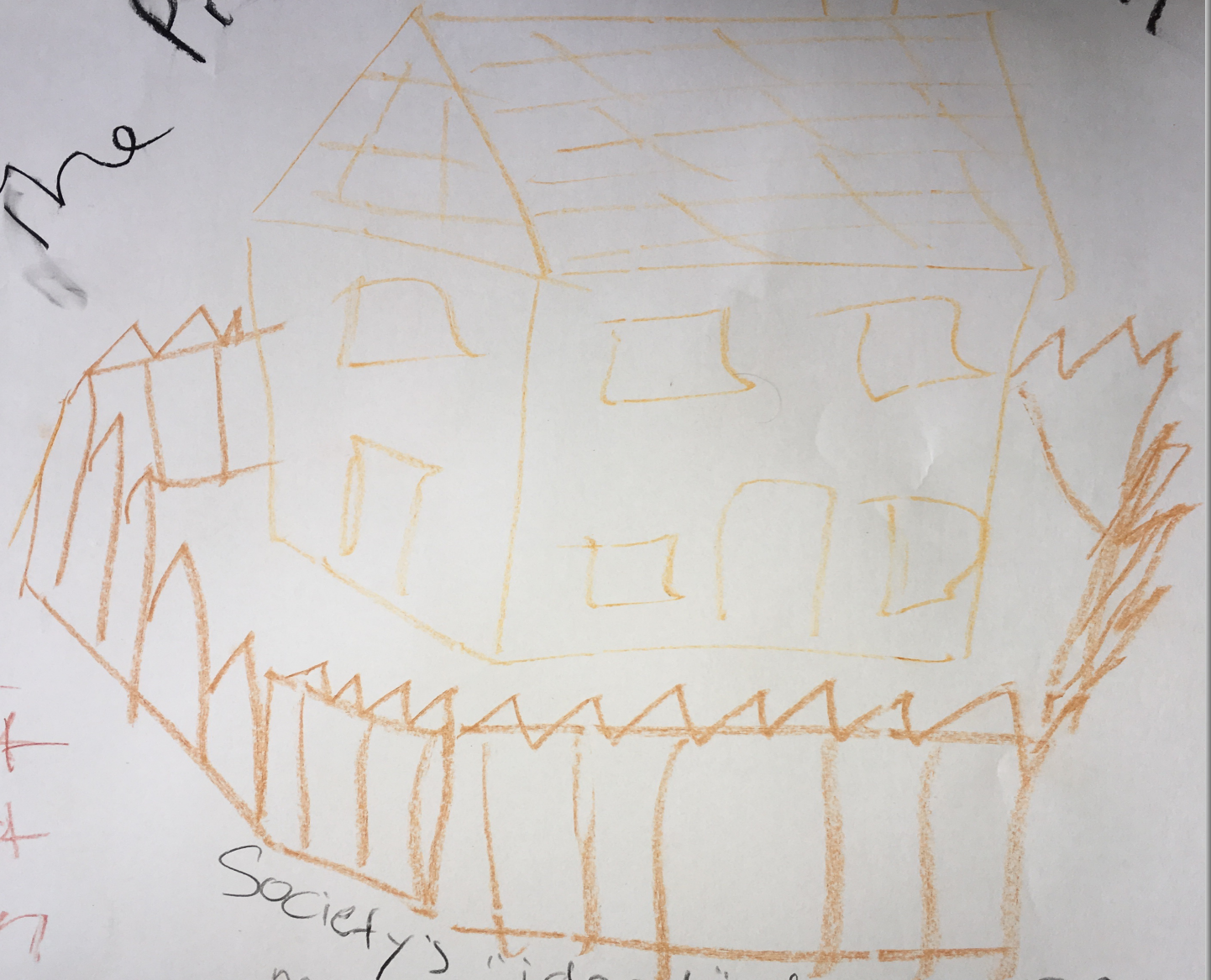# Semiology

Discourse

DISCOURSE

The Picket Fence Prison

Society's "ideal" for women
men & hetero family.

Findings

Feminist Consciousness:

Oppression of women is universal, female consciousness is not

– To know oneself the purview of society must be adopted

(Bartky, 1990; Judith Butler,1988)

http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/a/consciousness_raising_groups.htm

Three Themes

1.) *It takes a village* (relational autonomy and collective parenting)

2.) *The caring core* (an ethics of care and awareness of self and others)

3.) *The embrace* (willingness to turn towards pain and discomfort)

Ultimately reject 'masculine' values that are often valourized in a patriarchal society; valued educators who joined them in this

It Takes a Villages

- Collective parenting practices

"Rather than denying our interdependence, [the] aim is to find a knife sharp enough to cut through the fiction of our independence"
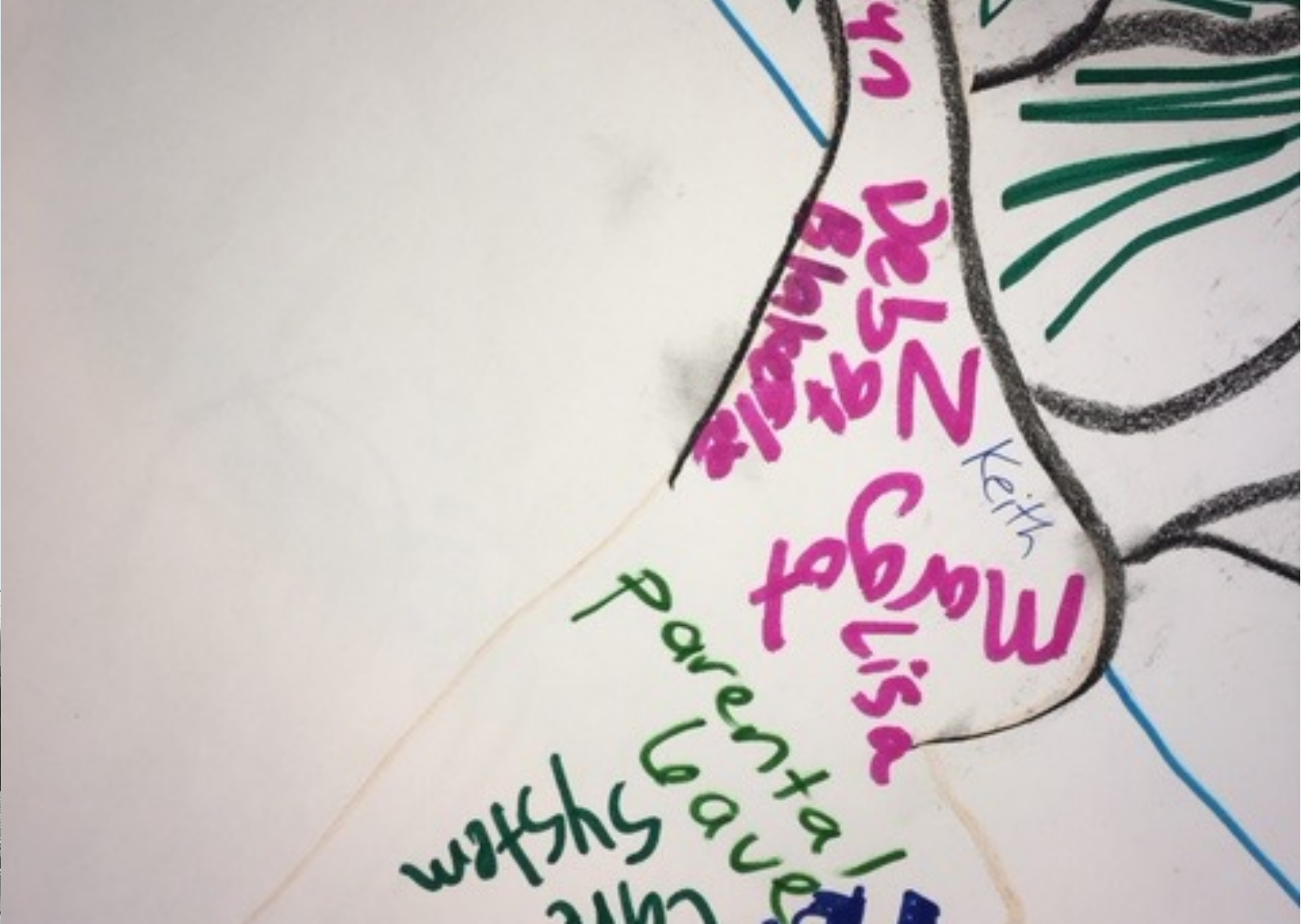
(Fedor Kittay, 1999, p. xiii)

Alicia's Community

The Caring Core

- *Attentive to the needs of self/others*
- *Relationships prioritized*
- *Emotions are attended to*
- *Context prioritized*

"If the grounding of respect and attentiveness requires a universal category at all, then the fundamental dependency of human beings on one another is a more likely candidate"

(Conradi, 2015, p. 120)

Alicia's Feet on the Globe:
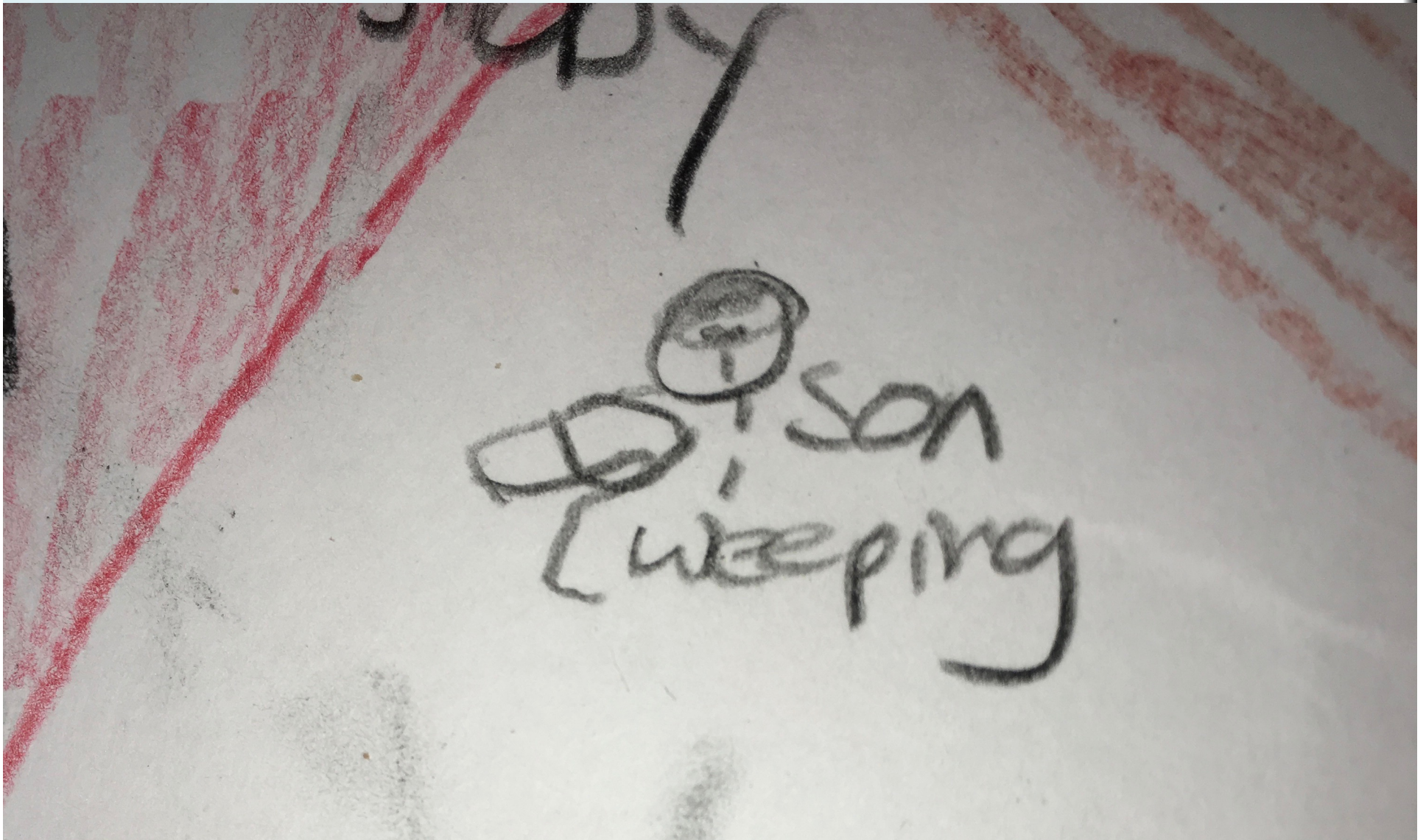## Caring for the Universe
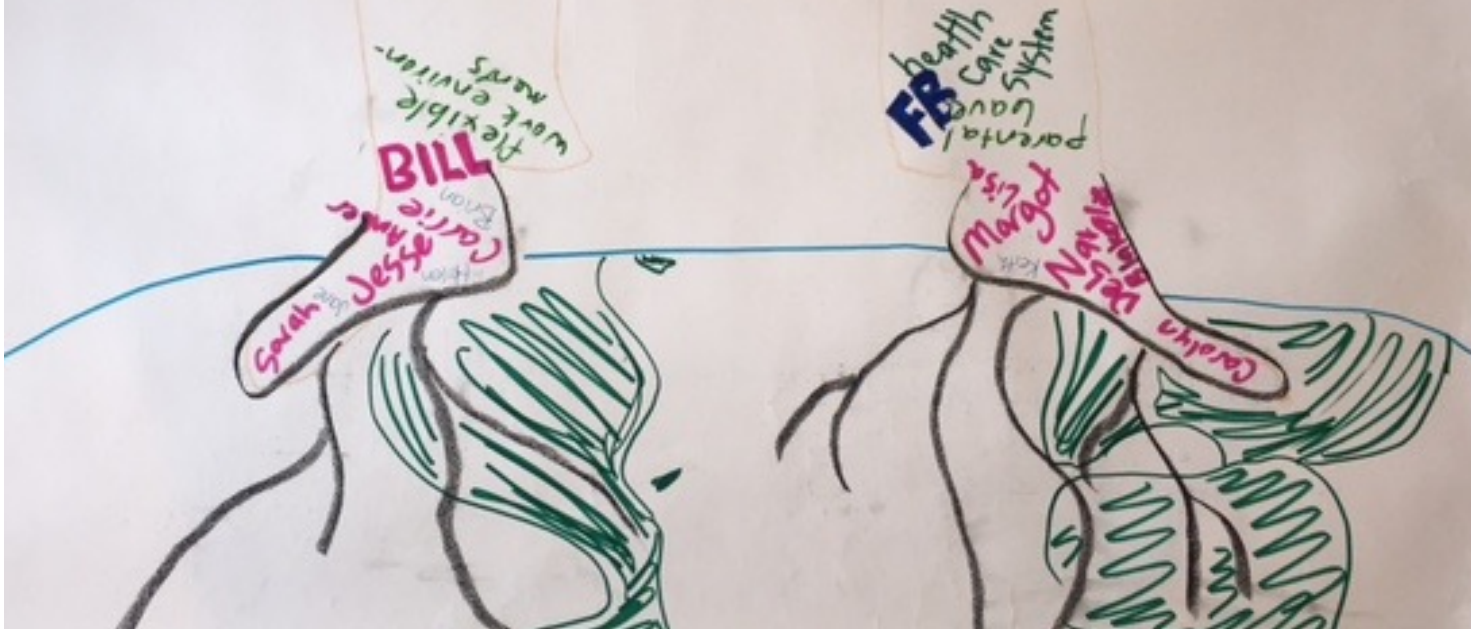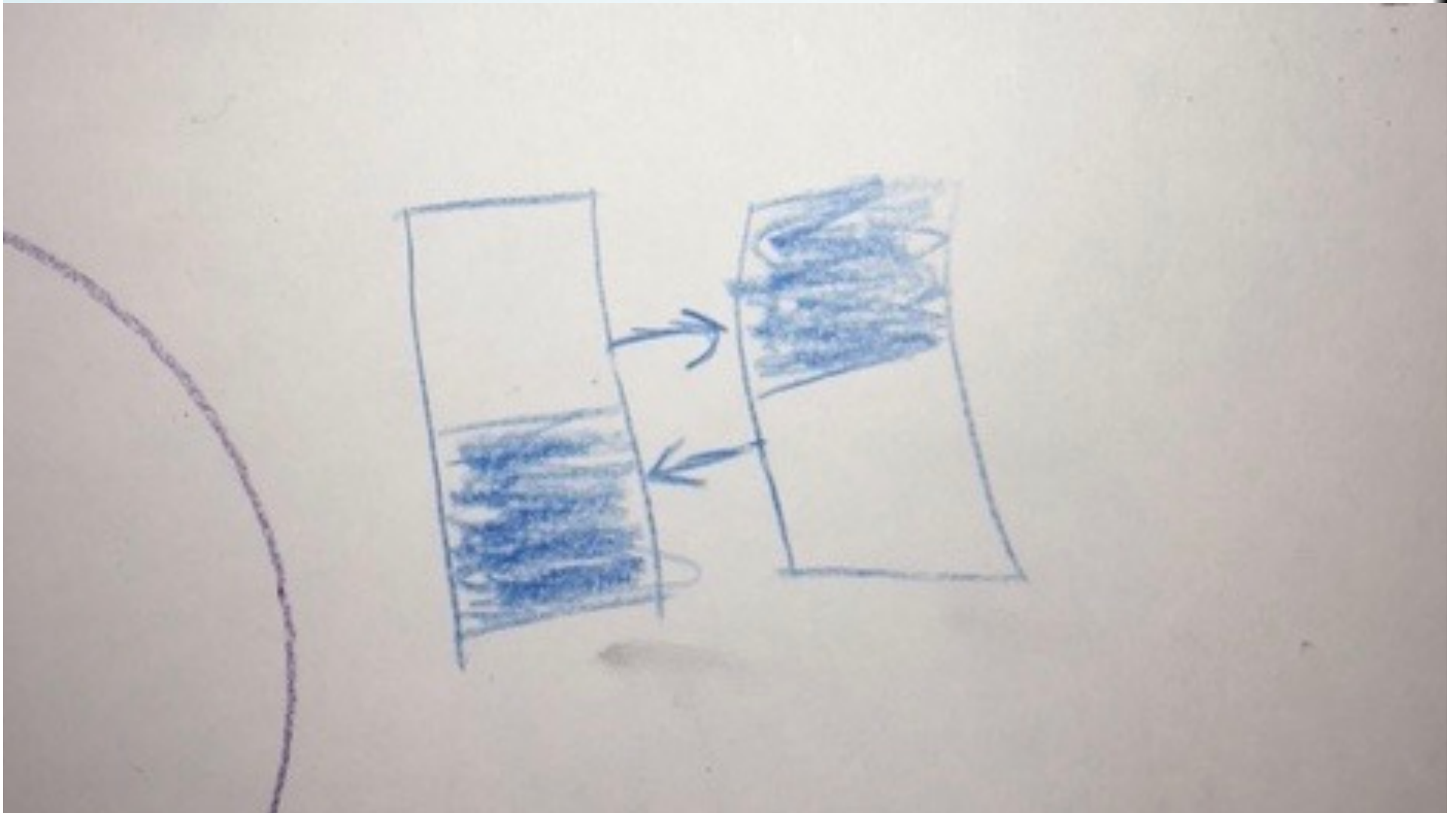
Nina's Heart Marks

Turning to Pain

- *Facing life's challenges*

- *Helping their children understand how to do the same*

Turning to Pain: Loja's son's tears

Joanne's Glass half empty/full

FINAL THOUGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Implications

- *Working mothers often sense that the choice/need to work always brings loss:*
  - *She loses her autonomy and health*
  - *or her children's wellbeing suffers*
- *I did not see this as part of these women's experiences*

Fedor Kittay, 1999)

(

Implications

- *These women thought quite politically*
- *Educators may want to consider ways to develop/support a feminist consciousness and to resist dominant narratives that can have negative outcomes for families*

- *We may need to seriously consider how to rebuild infrastructure (ECE and C) without further subjugating an entire gender*
- *Boys and girls need to be socialized accordingly*
- *Laws and regulations more clearly enforced*
  - *still overwhelmingly mothers who seek flexible work arrangements, often out of a sense of guilt*
  - *men still face job insecurity when they take parental leave*

(Boreili, Nelson, River, Birken, & Moss-Racusin, 2016)

Quality Considerations

"This is f—king awesome"

"I found myself tearing reading this excerpt you sent. Curious. So much layered into this topic, so much unspoken, unsaid, unreflected in our 'work' of mothering. You've given us a gift"

Thoughts…

- *Viewed early childhood educators as partners in their feminist work*

- *Do educators feel the same way? Why or Why not?*

Reflect

- *In what ways can you become more political?*
  - *How does public perception of working mothers shape your work and life?*
- *How might you work more effectively with working mothers to enact better policy?*

Concluding Thoughts

"As long as a cultural ideology of *mothering* expectations is perpetuated and ideologically differentiated from *parenting* expectations, mothers will be prone to responding to their parenting identity in gendered ways" *(Johnston & Swanson, 2006, p. 519)*

"To decrease the social demands on working mothers, there is a need to develop alternative models of motherhood that encompass greater breadth and diversity" *(Guendouzi, 2006, p. 907)*

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