

Open House: A Performance Art Project by Single-Mother and Son  
Or  
If You Haven't an Academic Home, Invite the Academy into Your Home



Figure 1: The bright blue wall that became a symbol of "home".

**Abstract:** *Open House*, a performance art project originally titled "Give and Take," took place in September 2010. My son and I created this project as an invitational gesture: we hoped to make a home for ourselves within the academy by inviting the academy into our home. Members of our academic community were split into small groups, given a key to our home, and, for one week, invited to show up at our home anytime—day or night, announced or not—to see what our life was like. Not everyone showed up, but, nevertheless, there was a shift in our community that was palpable as a result of this project.

In what follows, I share documentation from this experiment and offer a contextualizing narrative that provides background regarding circumstances and politics that influenced our performance, a performance that raises (and perhaps offers some answers to) questions about community, belonging, academia, and motherhood.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This essay was adapted from a presented at the February 2018 Museum of Motherhood Conference, "Teaching Mother Studies in the Academy and Beyond," in St. Petersburg, FL.

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1: The bright blue wall .....	1
Figure 2: Slide 1 of Benjamin's slideshow .....	6
Figure 3: A photo of our duplex apartment .....	7
Figure 4: Office/dining area .....	8
Figure 5: A slide showing an image of our cat .....	9
Figure 6: Leftover station at USF installation space.....	10
Figure 7: "Paint Me" canvas that resulted in the wall being painted blue.....	12
Figure 8: David, front, and his partner Steve transform our bare walls .....	13
Figure 9: Benjamin's Open House comic .....	14
Figure A1: Email to class .....	20
Figure A2: "Open House" invitation.....	23

## Background

When my son was eleven we, single mother and child, moved across the country from Arizona to Florida so that I could embark on my doctoral studies in Communication at the University of South Florida. It was an extremely difficult transition for both of us. In Arizona, where we had both grown up and lived nearly our entire lives, we had family and friends. In Florida, we knew no one.

My son quickly grew homesick, desperate for family we had left behind and for the place that had been the only home he had known his entire life; and I quickly became overwhelmed. Up until this point, I had been able to negotiate single motherhood and my academic pursuits somewhat separately. But in Arizona I had a network of family and friends who helped to make that possible. In Florida, away from that support network, it seemed increasingly impossible to balance the demands of single motherhood with the demands of a rigorous doctoral program.

I also felt disconnected from my graduate community. There were not any other single mothers in my department. At that time, in a large program at a Research 1 school, there was only one other mother, period. People in the community knew I was a single mom and they knew Benjamin (mainly because the poor kid was always hanging around the department), but so much of what that really meant—motherhood, our daily lives—was invisible. Before I knew it, though it was not my intention when I embarked on my studies, my doctoral project became a project about motherhood: about work-school-life balance, about the politics of motherhood and academia, about finding a way for my son to have a forum and way to voice his experience;<sup>2</sup> a

---

<sup>2</sup> Though the focus of this particular essay is to relate the story of a performance more than to theorize it, I would be remiss not to point to some of literature and conversations that are relevant and/or that have been particularly influential in my work in these areas. For example, the 2015 Fall/Winter Issue of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (JMI)* titled, “Mothers in the Academe,” offers several articles specific to graduate student mothers’ experiences with work-life balance in academia as does Mari Castaneda’s and Kirsten Isgro’s edited collection, *Mothers in Academia*. Finally, D. Lynn O’Brien Hallstein’s and Andrea O’Reilly’s

project that involved making the unseen aspects of single motherhood visible to those who did not want to or have to see it. And, though I did not realize it at the time, it also became a project about learning how to forge connections with others through difference.

I began involving Benjamin in my research as a participant and co-researcher. We co-wrote and performed a piece about our daily lives for a performance class I was enrolled in and later took that work to a national conference. As part of a research methods class I was taking, we piloted a qualitative research study where Benjamin and I interviewed other single moms and their kids about their experiences connected to the mothers' pursuit of a graduate education. I was in charge of interviewing the moms; Benjamin got to interview the kids. It was interesting, but I did not pursue the study because: 1) it was hard to find research participants—there are not a lot of single moms in graduate school and 2) qualitative interviewing turned out not to be the best fit as a method of inquiry for my eleven-year-old son. Unfortunately, by the end of that project and the end of our first year in Florida, we both were still feeling a lack of at-home-ness in our community.<sup>3</sup> However, at the beginning of my second year, after seeing Benjamin's interest in performance studies, a professor in my department invited Benjamin to participate in a Performance Art class she was teaching—a graduate class. I enrolled also.

This situation, having a kid in the class, was one that was not well received by all the students.<sup>4</sup> After one particularly negative complaint, I was asked by the professor to address the

---

*Academic Motherhood in Post-Second Wave Context* is essential for understanding and theorizing the structural politics facing mothers in contemporary academic contexts.

<sup>3</sup> Further details about these projects were previously published in the article "Experiments in Voice and Visibility," as part of the *JMI* 2015 special issue, "Mothers in the Academe."

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it is not too shocking that some students were surprised and unhappy to see a child in their classroom. Academia engenders a culture of childfree space—or as Cunningham (38) argues, a 'mother-free space'—that is perpetuated both by official institutional policies (for example, see UC Boulder's very specific stance on [children in the workplace](#)) and academics that defend this position formally in disciplinary journals. In my discipline even some of our most renowned feminist scholars are openly critical about children in the workplace. For example, see "Does it Take a Department to Raise a Child?" (Dow) and "The Invisible Politics of 'Choice' in the Workplace: Naming the Informal Parenting Support System" (Wood and Dow).



class regarding my son's presence and participation in the course. It was a conversation that needed to happen.<sup>5</sup> I wanted people to understand the work I was doing and we needed to have an open dialogue about the limits, perceived or real, that the presence of a minor child might place on their work. So, we had the conversation. Many of my peers were actually very supportive, but certainly not everyone. For Benjamin and me, the class felt tense after that—and it certainly added to the alienation and discomfort we were already feeling in academic settings. Thus, the idea for our project emerged from a place of alienation and discomfort that was speckled with a handful of welcoming faces and open hearts. Fueled by a strong desire for connection and perhaps a bit of desperation, as a class assignment for our performance art class, we created our “Give and Take” open house project, which has subsequently been referred to as *Open House*.

In what follows, I introduce and relate the performance as it was presented to our academic community because I want you, the reader, to experience the performance with a similar chronology, to make sense along the way, and to reflect after. I also choose to foreground our performance over conceptual discussion in this narrative essay because, as you will see, we made a deliberate choice to move outside of academic conversations and contexts (quite literally) for this performance. Stepping away from the academic not only allowed Benjamin's fuller participation and engagement in the project, but I believe it invited and enabled a different kind of participation from our academic community as well, one key to the outcomes of this project which are discussed further in the conclusion. Nevertheless, given the particular context of this performance, a graduate classroom where many students were skeptical of the presence of a twelve-year-old and his ability to meaningfully engage with the content, I also feel it is important

---

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I for the email that was sent to this class explaining the larger project.

to demonstrate that concepts from the class influenced our thinking, especially Benjamin's, around this project. Thus, as I discuss the project, I will note some of the performances and concepts that informed our work; the artist statement (see Appendix II) contains further evidence of these influences.

### Open House Performance

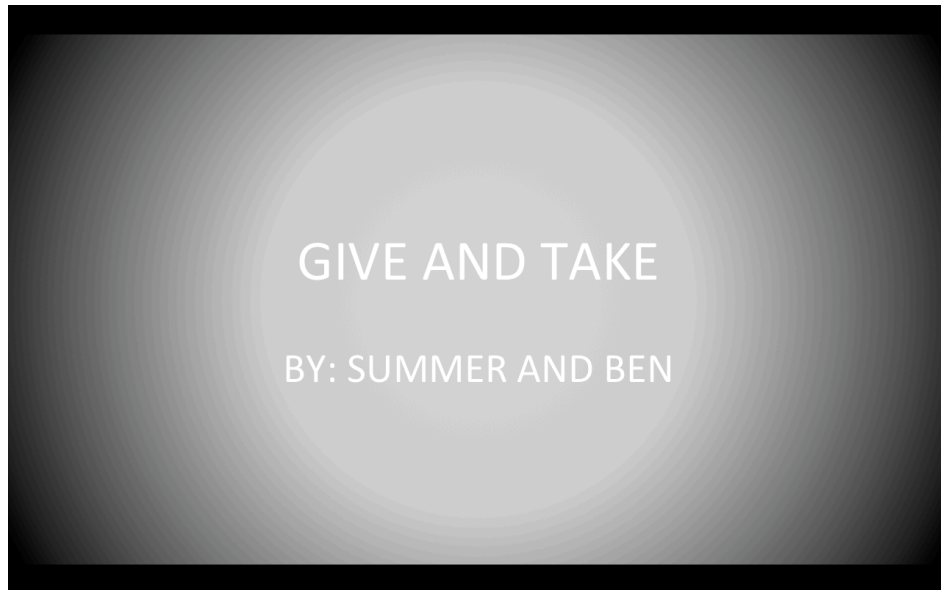


Figure 2: Slide 1 of Benjamin's slideshow.

On the day we were scheduled to perform for our class, we passed out envelopes to each member and instructed our participants not to open them until they were directed to do so. Participation was a recurring theme in the work we were discussing in our class, and, because we desired to form a connection to/with this community, we knew that we wanted our classmates to see themselves as participants in our performance.<sup>6</sup> After the envelopes were distributed, we presented a PowerPoint presentation that Benjamin made using pictures he had taken of our

---

<sup>6</sup> In the course, we were reading several books from a series titled *Documents in Contemporary Art*. The projects and ideas discussed in *Situation* (Doherty), *The Everyday* (Johnstone) and *Participation* (Bishop), resonated with me most. As a student of performance studies, I was familiar with the perspective of audience member as participant/performer and also aware of the power of staged performances to create connection between artists and audience, but it was not until I began looking at the work of conceptual and performance artists—take Situationism for example—that I began to rethink the *place* of performance and imagine that there were ways to merge the everyday with performance, a way to use performance to critique institutions that separate people from one another while simultaneously creating possibilities for bringing people together.

home. Figure 1 was the first slide in the presentation and reflects the original title of the performance. The subsequent slide (Fig. 2) contained a picture of the outside of our home. At \$875 per month, the two-bedroom duplex apartment was a steal that was still barely affordable to me on my graduate student income. I later found out it was only possible for the landlord to rent it so cheaply because he had stopped paying the mortgage on it.



**Figure 3: A photo of our duplex apartment from Benjamin's slideshow—ours was on the right side.**

We moved into the duplex our second year in Florida after renting a furnished home the year prior. Since we came to Florida with the few things that would fit in my car, having a furnished home that first year was a blessing. Moving into the duplex, our lack of belongings became apparent as shown in Benjamin's slideshow which reflected both the bare white walls of the inside of our home and our sparse mismatch of furnishings, most of which were donated to us by a few friends from the department or free items that were literally found on the side of road. For example, Figure 4 shows the dining room that was used as my office that adjoined our living

room area. You can notice the bare walls here. The desk pictured was donated from a professor who was moving; the small side table was donated to us from a neighborhood acquaintance I met shortly after moving in. He instructed me to pay it forward and give it freely to someone else when I did not need it any longer. Other slides showed an image of our futon, which I found on the side of the road with a “free” sign and a bed that was donated to me by a graduate student from another department who I met in a seminar class the semester before. She was also mother and sympathetic to our situation.



**Figure 4: Office/dining area from Anonymous 1’s slideshow. Bare walls. Donated furniture.**

The rest of the slideshow contained other pictures of our house taken from Benjamin’s perspective, a house that did not really feel or look like much of a home to either of us. Figure 5 was a very important slide for Benjamin and a foreshadowing of the invitation we were about to propose to our class. The final slide was a “direction” slide, another reflection of the concepts we were playing with from our class, which contained three instructions: “1. Open your envelopes,

2. Find your index card, 3. Find your group.” Benjamin was particularly fascinated with randomness and chance<sup>7</sup> operation so each envelope contained a colored index card. Students had to match themselves up with other people in their color group; thus, the groups were random. Each envelope also contained an invitation (Fig. A2) and one person in each group also received a key in their envelope. Our invitees were provided with a map to our home and instructed to come by anytime between September 23<sup>rd</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup>, announced or not, and told to make themselves at home. They had a key after all.



**Figure 5: A slide showing an image of our cat, Garfield. Benjamin was concerned he might be let out during our performance.**

The text at the top of the invitation reads, “An Invitation to Give and Take” (Fig. A2). Additionally, the invitation contained information conventionally appropriate to a party invite such date and time, address, and a map to our home. It also provided a short list of rules/requests

---

<sup>7</sup> In class were learning about Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, and doing our own experiments with *I Ching*. Benjamin was particularly interested in chance and randomness. These concepts impacted other aspects of this performance as well as other work he did inside and outside of our class.



that included a plea not to let the cat out or copy our keys. Thus, our home was entirely open to our class, day or night for a full week.

### *Daily Offering and Leftovers*



**Figure 6: Leftover station at USF installation space.**

We envisioned the week to be a kind of extended open house or house warming party event not uncommonly thrown when you move into a new residence. In keeping with such conventions, each day we put out a “daily offering”, an offering to our guests of gifts or food, much like you might provide for guests at a party. For example, the first day we baked cookies and left them out for anyone who came by that day. The second day, we made paper swans—enough for everyone in the class— from recycled magazine pages and hung them from the ceiling with fishing line. We were also hoping that our guests might be willing to give something, too, similar to the way you might bring flowers or wine or even a gift to a house-



warming party. So, on the third or fourth day of the open house, I put out some clean laundry that needed folding with a note requesting help with that chore.

Though Benjamin and I were both hoping to facilitate community through this performance, I was also trying to make our everyday life as single graduate student mother and child more visible to my community. An ongoing theme in my life at that time was the conflict I felt between my academic obligations and my parental obligations. It was impossible to be at two places at once, but I was frequently required or expected at academic events that I could not attend as a result of my parental duties or vice versa. Thus, it was often difficult for me to participate actively in social or professional events. I did not want place anyone else in that situation so I used an installation space on campus in the department to create a “leftover station” (Fig. 6). Anyone unable to attend our open house on a given day could find the leftovers from the daily offering there so that they might participate in the offering from that day. During the performance debrief, one participant remarked that he had folded my laundry twice: once at my home and then the next day on campus.

Our favorite day from the weeklong performance resulted from a misunderstanding that we put out as our daily offering. Hoping to create an opportunity to procure some art for our bare white walls, we placed a small can of paint, art supplies and a canvas that read “I want to be painted (stapled pinned, inked, etc. . . .)/ I want to become / Transform me” on the offering table in our living room (Fig. 7). That day after picking-up Benjamin from school, we went grocery shopping. We arrived home and were rushing from the car through a torrential downpour of rain, trying to get our things inside before everything was completely soaked. In our rush to get inside, Benjamin and I both momentarily forgot that we were in the middle of a performance and were completely arrested by the scene that was unfolding when we opened our door. A couple of

group members from our class, including the professor, along with their partners and the daughter of our professor were in our home, painting our dining room wall blue (see Fig. 8).



**Figure 7: "Paint Me" canvas that resulted in the wall being painted blue.**

For a second, I panicked, worrying that the paint might result in the loss of my rental deposit. But that moment passed quickly, and I picked up a brush and joined the group. Our new friends stayed for awhile. Our professor and her partner departed shortly and returned with warm food, homemade enchiladas, to share with everyone. That day marked the first moment that our house, that Florida, felt like a home to us.



**Figure 8: David, front, and his partner Steve transform our bare walls into a brilliant blue; transform our house into a home.**

### *Chance Bowl and Art Station*

Other aspects of our open house included an art station and a chance bowl. Art stations or craft stations are not uncommon to see at children's parties, and we thought some of our guests might find crafting and creating to be a fun "party" event to partake in. Games are also often an activity that people engage in at parties. As mentioned earlier, Benjamin was particularly interested in performances that centered around the concept of "chance" so we created a "Chance Bowl" filled with slips of paper that contained various directions such as "Make a sandwich" or "Hug someone you love." Over the course of the performance, we had someone 'make a sandwich' and 'take a stroll around the neighborhood.' The complete list of "Chance Bowl" prompts are in Appendix I.



## Performance Outcomes

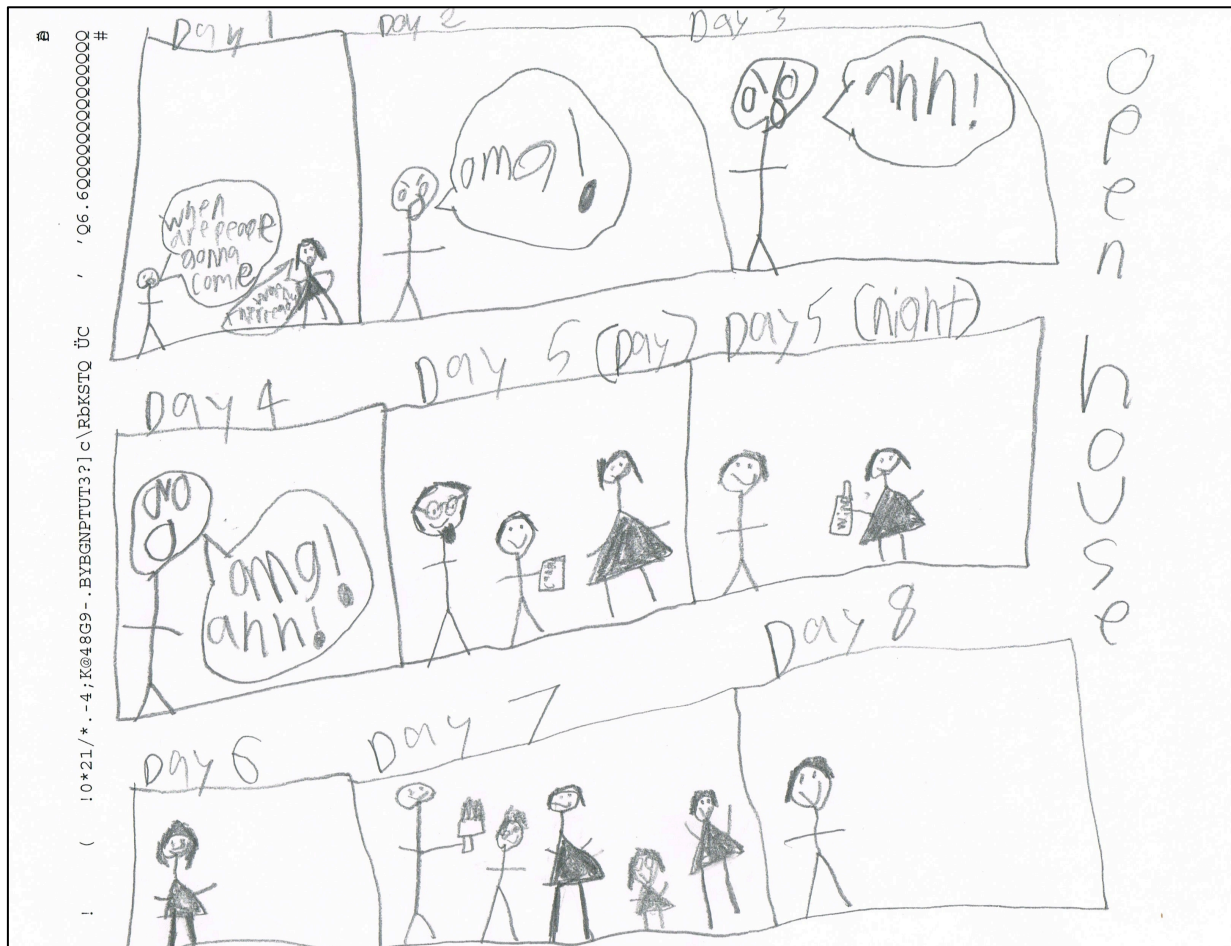


Figure 9: Benjamin's *Open House* comic illustrates each day of the performance

Day 1: When are people going to come?

Day 2: OMG!

Day 3: AHH

Day 4: OMG! AHH!!

Day 5: People finally came (day and night)

Day 6: Another Person

Day 7: An entire group came (very special day, that's a paint brush)

Day 8: One last visitor

As a communication scholar, I am interested in how creative inquiry, art, and performance might facilitate communicative possibilities in the world that other forms of communication do not. Our discipline and pedagogy frequently prioritizes argumentation, logic, and clarity over understanding, connection, and the appreciation of difference. In a world that is

increasingly polarized, isolating, and plagued by problems of difference, it seems that a focus on the latter is needed. For me, this performance exemplifies the real possibility of creative work to shift and shape community.

Figure 9 shows the comic that Benjamin created to document his experience of our performance. It offers a nice timeline of the event and details how stressful the first few days were for him as he worried that no one would show up. I was worried, too—worried that we might never find a home in this community, in academia.

But people did show up. And, though not everyone did, our performance seemed to have a palpable impact on our classmates as well as the local academic community beyond that class. Even people from our class who could not attend were impacted. For example, one unintended outcome of the performance was that several of our classmates expressed guilt and regret at not being able to participate due to their other life obligations. I was able to explain how this was often my experience as a single mother when it came to participating in academic events. Thus, the similar feelings created a connection to class members who did not even come into our home.

Students who did participate, however, were noticeably more welcome to Benjamin's presence in our class and in the department. The participation, the doing and being there, was key. Participating in this performance meant showing-up for an encounter with members of the academic community in a non-academic space; it shifted the context from the academic to everyday, or in the least, blurred the lines between the academic and the everyday. This shift made *our* everyday not only more visible but more tangible and complex. Standing inside someone's home is a much richer and more intimate experience than viewing images on a PowerPoint presentation. In her introduction to *Participation*, Bishop writes that in participative art "physical involvement is considered an essential precursor to social change" (13). This

seemed true of the change that was initiated through and after our performance. Being present physically, seeing where and how we lived, folding our laundry—something about these experiences seemed to foster empathy and understanding. Further, for Benjamin, the shift from the academic context to the everyday is what enabled his physical involvement, which in turn enabled an agency not possible for him in our other collaborative projects and also was the genesis of personal relationships and collaborations specifically between Benjamin and other members of the community. For example, one student invited him to partner with her on her next class performance, and another student from outside of the department later invited both of us to participate in a performance art piece she was doing in conjunction with her thesis project.

Beyond our class, something seemed to shift in our department as well. We felt welcome. We—Benjamin and I—were both invited to events, both professional and social, more frequently than before. Benjamin's comic from the performance even morphed into a serial comic called "Mom's School" that he distributed throughout the department, garnering even greater awareness of his/our presence in the community. It is hard to say that this shift is directly a result of *Open House*, but I am convinced that this performance played a critical role in connecting us to our community, in helping to construct and cultivate the possibility for an academic community that could include children and mothers.

Johnstone notes that performance artists grapple with the question "if the everyday is the realm of the unnoticed and the overlooked . . . it might be asked just how we can attend to it? How do we drag the everyday into view?" (Johnstone 13). Indeed, Benjamin grappled with this question and this performance was our attempt at a response. Johnstone continues to explain that purpose and potential of work that confronts the everyday is that it affords the possibility to change the things that we, or perhaps others, take for granted (13-14). Our performance



engendered new connections, helped people from different backgrounds understand each other, and moved the lived realities of (single) motherhood from the periphery to a place of visibility within an academic community. Of course, at the time, my aim was not so lofty. At the time, though I was (and still am) politically invested in making academic spaces more accessible to student mothers, I was, as a mother, most immediately interested in making a life that could work for both my child and me. Nevertheless, this experience has had a lasting impact on me as communication scholar. It showed me that finding creative ways to see one another, to be and do together, and to know does far more to facilitate empathy across difference than debate or lecture can.

After the performance, every time we returned home, the first thing we would see was our bright blue wall, which came to symbolize home and community. Years later, when we moved from the duplex, I took a sample of the blue paint and used it to paint the walls in the kitchen of our new home so that it would *feel* like home. By inviting others into our home, whether the invitation was accepted or not, we invited opportunity. This performance involved risk, chance, desperation, love, and things so much more mundane. For us, it was the starting point of community and of relationships that, especially for me, continue to be significant in my life nearly eight years later.

Works Cited

- Bishop, Claire, editor. *Participation*. MIT, 2006. Documents of Contemporary Art.
- Castaneda, Mari and, Kirsten Isgro, editors. *Mothers in Academia*. Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Cunningham, Summer. "Experiments in Voice and Visibility: Creating Space for Graduate Student (Single) Mothers in the Mother-Free Space of the Academy." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2015, pp. 37-51.
- Doherty, Claire, editor. *Situation*. MIT, 2006. Documents of Contemporary Art.
- Dow, Bonnie J. "Does It Take a Department to Raise a Child?" *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2008, pp.158-65.
- "Guidelines for Children in the Workplace and/or Classroom." *The University of Colorado Boulder*. 13 July 201, <https://www.colorado.edu/policies/guidelines-children-workplace-andor-classroom>.
- Johnstone, Stephen, editor. *The Everyday*. MIT, 2006. Documents of Contemporary Art.
- O'Brien Hallstein, D. Lynn, and Andrea O'Reilly, editors. *Academic Motherhood in a Post Second Wave Context Challenges Strategies and Possibilities*, Demeter Press, 2012.
- The Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI). "Mothers in the Academe." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2015.
- Wood, Julia T., and Bonnie J. Dow. "The Invisible Politics of 'Choice' in the Workplace: Naming the Informal Parenting Support System." *Contemplating Maternity in an Era of*

*Choice: Explorations into Discourses of Reproduction*, edited by Sara Hayden and D.

Lynn O'Brien Hallstein, Lexington Books, 201, pp. 203-25.

## APPENDIX I:

### Email to Performance Art Class regarding Anonymous 2's presence in class.



#### ORI6018.901F10: Describing the Elephant

11 messages

Wed, Sep 1, 2010 at 4:32 PM

Hi All,

Me again. I just wanted to add an addendum to the email I sent out last week. I realize that in many ways, we are all somewhat new to one another. Many of us don't know each other yet, and aren't familiar with each other's research endeavors. I thought giving you some background on my particular interests would provide a bit more context with regard to [REDACTED] participation in this class.

I am interested in motherhood and academia, not just as experiences, but as institutions with hegemonic discourses and practices. Because of my research and positionality, I am both sensitive to and critical of the ways in which we delimit, bound, and define (public/academic/work/performance) spaces. These are issues I explore in my work, and, in work as in life, I often explore these issues with my son. For example, last semester [REDACTED] and I piloted a collaborative research project where we interviewed other graduate student single mothers AND their children about their experiences related to the mother's pursuit of an education. I interviewed the mothers; Benjamin interviewed the children. As a single mother, [REDACTED] is often (more often than not, in fact) present when I conduct, write, and think about research. His presence certainly influences my experiences and ideas, but this was the first time I had considered formally including and making visible his impact on the work. My dissertation project will be an extension of this collaborative methodology. Meaning, [REDACTED] and I are embarking on a project together. A central aspect of our project will be performance.

Of course, as you can probably see, [REDACTED] is ecstatic about participating in this class because he has a genuine passion for performance. I am taking this class because I also have an interest in performance, and because I hope the class will be influential in the development of our project. Additionally, I believe that his participation in this class will instill in him a more complex understanding of performance. I want him to see how performance can be used as a means to create, but also as a way to critique and question. Indeed, I feel that his very presence in the class illustrates this function of performance.

Finally, I truly believe that [REDACTED] has much to bring to the class. I hope that in hindsight you will look back and be able to say that our presence and participation in this community somehow enriched your experience. All that being said, I realize this is not conventional, and I don't for a minute believe that any one person's work takes priority over any others. I want us all to be able to do the work we need to do in this class. So please, let's address specific concerns while at the same time being mindful that with performance art, it might not always be possible or ideal to eliminate every discomfort.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

**APPENDIX II:**  
**ADDITIONAL “OPEN HOUSE” DOCUMENTS**

**Original “Open House” Artist Statement**

Anonymous 2 and Benjamin Present: Give and Take  
(Take Something, Make Something?)  
Open House

*Overview.* This performance is about the everyday, the mundane and the not so mundane, creation, chance, invitation, reversal, participation, collaboration, home, public/private, community, borders/boundaries, space, risk, vulnerability, interruption, and life. Our life. And maybe yours, also.

For Benjamin, this is an opportunity for our peers to see into our everyday, to see what our life is like right now, and maybe that will give them a better idea as to who we are as human beings in our society.

For Anonymous 2, this is also an opportunity to extend her current interests with regard to the intersection of (single)motherhood and academia. Although much of her (and Benjamin’s) everyday lived experiences happen at USF, there is much in life that doesn’t happen there. A large portion of our lives are lived in our homes. Anonymous 2’s larger project involves making visible to her academic community the complicated, messy, “accidentally miraculous” (Johnstone), stressful, beautiful, contradictory, give-and-take elements of everyday life for a single-mother-headed family. However, when those aspects of her life are only glimpsed from within the walls of the university, it offers a very limited view. This piece offers participants a chance to gain a different perspective. We invite participants to come over and see what happens. We invite participants to come over and see *if* anything happens.

*The Performance.* This piece will be conducted in at least three spaces at varying and overlapping times/durations.

1. **Place:** Performance Lab  
**Time/Duration:** Thursday Sept. 23, 2010 at approximately 8:00 PM; 5-7 minutes
2. **Place:** Our Home  
**Time/Duration:** Thursday Sept. 23, 2010 – Thursday Sept. 30, 2010, 8 days
3. **Place:** USF Installation/Performance Space  
**Time/Duration:** Friday Sept. 24, 2010 - Thursday Sept. 30, 2010, 7 days

For this performance, we’ve decided to open our home to our class for one week. During our in-class performance (#1), members of the class community will receive an invitation to our open house along with keys to our front door. Participants will be permitted to enter our home (#2) whenever they wish (if they wish) for the duration of the performance using their keys. This will provide an opportunity for members to come observe and/or participate in a part of our daily lives that they normally do not have access to. (Note: we are on a limited budget in life, and have, therefore, limited the budget of this project to \$20. Accordingly, we could not afford to make a key for everyone. Therefore, we

will group the class randomly and leave it up to each group to determine how they will share their key.)

Benjamin and I intend to go about our daily lives during this performance. We will attend school, work, cook, eat, hang-out with friends, study, and so on. However, since we are presenting this as an open house and open houses are typically party/gathering events, we will offer some additional, optional, and potentially creative activities for our guests to engage in when they are in our home. These activities will consist of a “Daily Offering” that will change each day, an ongoing “Chance” offering that will remain constant/available throughout the performance, and an “Art”-making station, which will also be available throughout the entire performance. In the spirit of giving and taking, we’d like to ask anyone accepting our offer to please give something in return.

Finally, we realize that it might not be possible for everyone to come to our open house, and also accept the fact that some class members might not wish to attend. However, we want to provide the opportunity for everyone to participate in our performance at some level. For this reason, we’ve asked each class member to bring us (1) a favorite song and (2) an item that represents them. We will incorporate these items into our performance at some point (though we’re not exactly sure how just yet). Additionally, we will set up a small “Leftover” station in the Performance Installation Space where we will provide anything leftover from the prior day’s “Daily Offering.”

*Outcome.* We hope we can incite creative participation from class members, and we hope that this will give you an opportunity to get to know us better/differently, and vice-versa. We’re interested to see how, if at all, this process will affect the dynamic of our class community.

Finally, we’re also interested in how this experiment might inform our future projects. Additionally, we hope that we’ve designed a project that is open to your experimentation, questions, and critiques; and we think it would be wonderful if this piece could somehow inform your future work.



## “Open House” Invitation

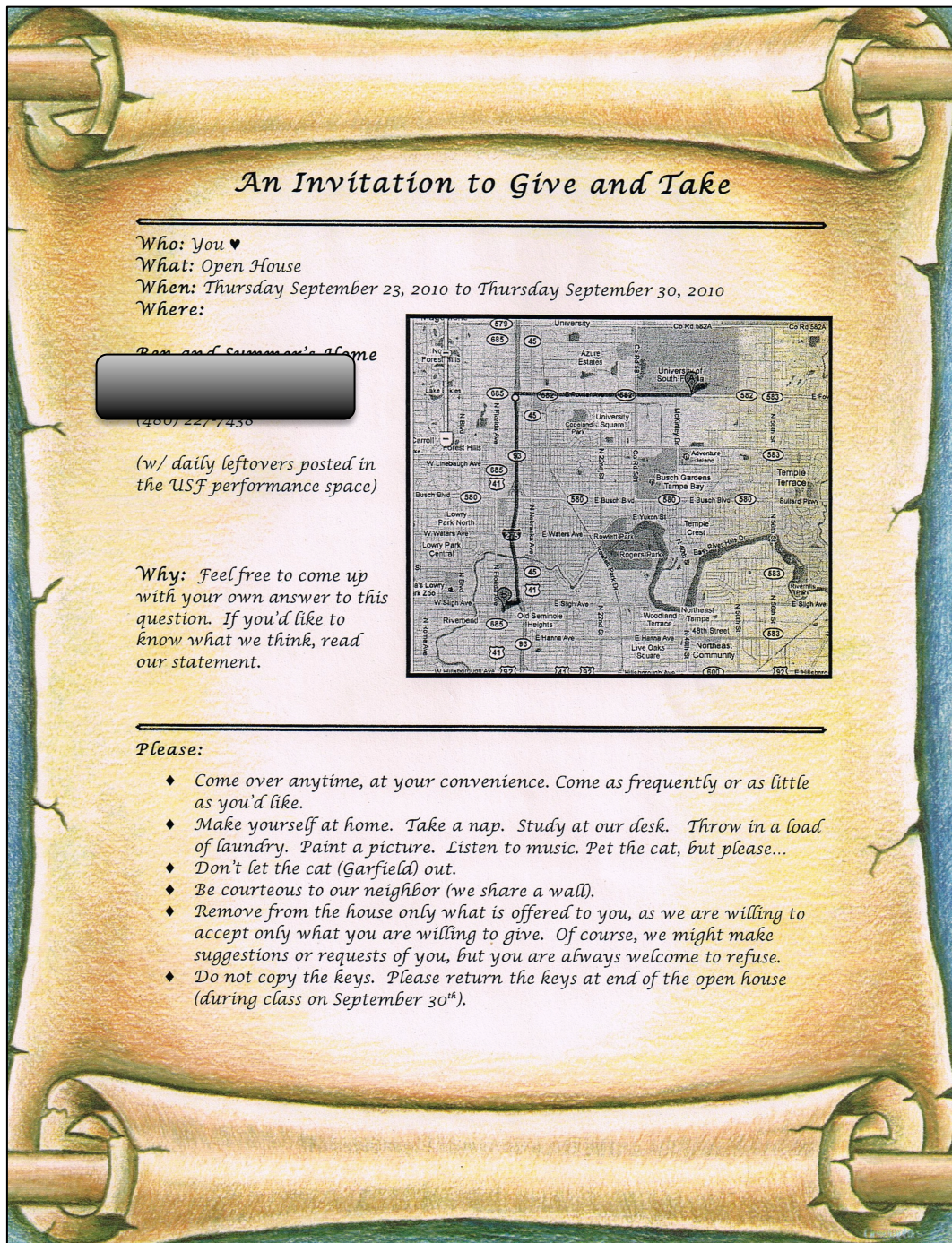


Figure A2: “Open House” invitation.

### **Prompts from the “Open House” ‘Chance Bowl’**

(Visitors/guests could draw slips of paper from the bowl. Below are the directions they would receive. Over the duration of the performance we had someone ‘make a sandwich’ and ‘take a stroll around the neighborhood.’ )

- Make a sandwich
- Clean the cat box. The litter box is located in Benjamin’s room (a.k.a, “The Blackhole”). There are plastic grocery/produce bags in the black, old-fashioned kitchen cabinet (lower left hand side when you’re facing it).
- Play with Garfield, but don’t let him out. You can find some cat toys...
- Sweep the floor. The broom is off the kitchen near the washer/dryer.
- Can you make Benjamin’s lunch for tomorrow? Thanks!
- Hug someone you love.
- Use the art supplies to create a picture for our wall.
- Take a stroll around our neighborhood. Bring us back a souvenir.
- Choose a gift from the gift ball.
- Make a stop animation using these four Lego guys.
- Choose a book from the bookshelf and read some of it.
- Take a picture with Garfield.
- Take double today’s offering.
- Take another offering and share it with somebody you love.