

Poster Abstract Book (All Poster)

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Re-flexivity to balance the personal and professional roles as a doctoral student-mother

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Abstract: By adopting the *photovoice* method, I examine the lived experiences as an international doctoral student mother in this paper. I present ways in which the intersectional identities I live, create a push and a pull to create a challenging space for growth as a scholar, especially during the times of the pandemic. At times this juncture involved the strenuous tensions from cultural expectations and social interactions in the institutional spaces. This reflective narrative highlights the complexities and struggles of a doctoral student-mother in envisioning the future self as a scholar and a mother. This narrative paper brings the need to pay close attention to the doctoral student carers when they are navigating an intricate and delicate path through their educational journey.

Poster Outline: With COVID-19, as many of my other colleagues, I have experienced challenges during the stage of completing my dissertation and in staying hopeful to find some light at the end of my doctoral journey. At the start of the pandemic, I navigated multiple roles as a singular person. The intersectional identities as a doctoral student, mother, daughter, and caregiver for my family in the US functioned within multiple contexts that were in the nature of spatial, temporal, personal, professional, social, emotional and many more. Apart from facing financial insecurities, health issues, anxiety about the well-being of parents and family, world crisis around social justice issues, and disputes that were closer to home, I needed to maintain continuity in my role as a doctoral student mother. This year and a half of living through a pandemic with constant effort to maintain a sense of normalcy for everyone and to provide care for their emotional needs, this paper brings this role from a position of strength and yet fragile moments.

There was a lot happening during this time and this paper will highlight those moments by using photovoice (Sontag, 1995) as a method to create a reflective journey of living these realities as a doctoral student mother. The goal of this presentation will be to bring forth a few questions that remained unanswered and how the higher education systems could present better support for students, especially when they bring multiple responsibilities. This paper may also point to the needs of this student population, especially when they come from multifaceted positionalities. This paper will also highlight the novel possibilities for flexible working, collaborative and inclusive workspaces to build the capacities for doctoral students. As higher education moves toward re-building, it is critical to involve students in activities that use re-flexive methods to recuperate and rework toward equitable opportunities to grow as scholars.

Poster References: Sontag, S. (1973). *On Photography*. New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Spence, J., Solomon, J. (1995). *What Can a Woman Do With a Camera?* London, Scarlet.