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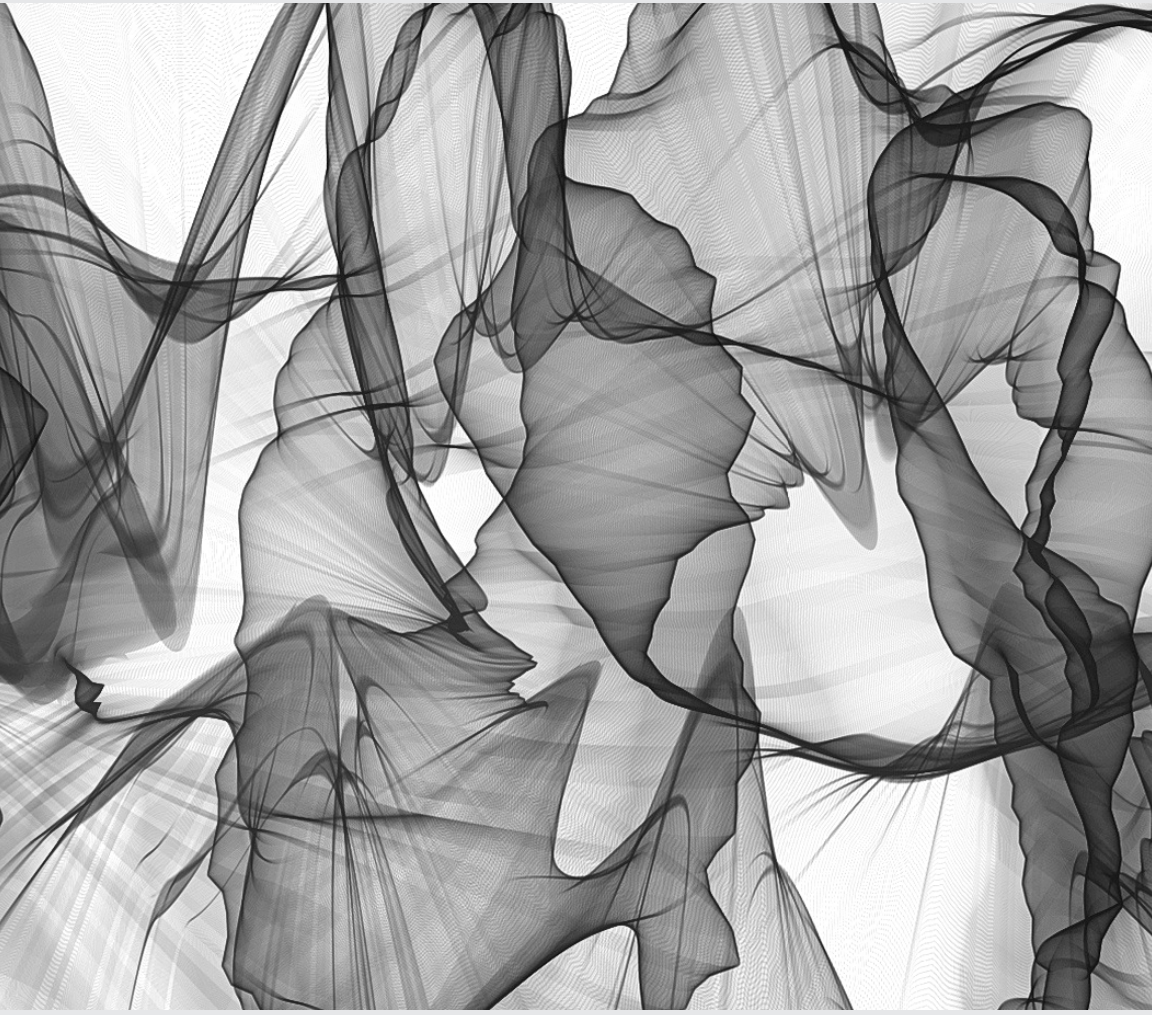

Denise Handlarski, Akanksha Misra, Margarita Levine, Jacqui Getfield, Pooja Bhatia Narang and many more

POOJA BHATIA NARANG, ARWA ALSHEHRI, AND GLORIA PARK

Three Mothers in Academia: Looking Inwards, Taking Stock, and Moving Forward

Grounded in relational cultural theory (RCT) as an approach for developing women's sense of self and maintaining connections with one another and with all women across racial, ethnic, and age divides, three mothers in the academy come together to restory our experiences of being and becoming mothers while navigating the higher educational landscape. We focus on critical incidents (Farrell) to create our collective autoethnography. Critical incidents are events that are unplanned and unanticipated and allow one to think about "what happened, why it happened and what else could have been done to reach their goals" (Farrell 3). Sharing our experiences means prioritizing the stories that are often overlooked in higher education institutions, where whiteness and male superiority abound. Specifically, we focus on what it means to navigate institutional expectations, given the mothering norms and responsibilities facing women of colour, who already exist on the margins. Coming together across racial, ethnic, and age divides in the academy led us to disclose specific events that challenged our professional and mothering responsibilities. Although we differ in terms of ethnicity, age, as well as academic and marital status, we still discussed the challenging nature of balancing home and academic lives both before and during the pandemic. We conclude with implications that focus on specific strategies for ourselves as well as others in the academy to support and nurture the development of mothers in academia.

Pooja, Arwa, and Gloria came into this collaborative writing project as mothers in academia. As mothers, as women of colour, and as teacher-scholars studying and working at a predominantly white institution (PWI), our stories of experiences are full of racial, gendered, and aged tensions. In this collective endeavour, our goal is to showcase the diversity within women's experiences (e.g., Park, *Narratives of East Asian Women*), especially women in the academy, across racial, ethnic, and age divides. A community of practice such as this

publishing endeavour has allowed us to be reminded of the power that comes with collective stories, which become a fuel for others to come forward and share and educate one another (Goldberger et al.). Although we are at different stages in academia, which illustrates that women's experiences can both converge and diverge to show their diversity, our experiences and stories point out critical themes in bringing more awareness and attention to mothers of all ages and status in academic communities around the world (Castañeda and Isgro; Crittenden; Evans and Grant). Equally important are how the societal and contextual spaces perceive and normalize women in academia in terms of our worth, credibility, and productivity in teaching and scholarship. Our work, in this piece, is one way to dismantle the societal values that privilege white male scholars above all else (Park, *My Autobiographical Poetic Rendition*; Park, *Narratives of East Asian Women*).

We situate our stories of experience using Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly's concept of narratives as "a way of understanding experience" (20). They continue to argue that "[narrative inquiry] is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (20). Thus, we are both participants and researchers trying to make sense of our individual yet collective experiences of what it means to be mothers in academia.

We are both storytellers and inquirers of those stories as we navigate and focus on what particular stories to share and why those particular stories are critical at this particular time in our academic journeys. As such, we move in and out of one another's stories of experiences while we make sense of our own as well as others' stories. To this, Clandinin has argued that "Whether inquirers begin with telling stories or living stories, we enter into the midst of stories. Participants' stories, inquiries' stories, social, cultural and institutional stories, are all ongoing as narrative inquiries begin" (47). As such, we came into this work as both participants and inquirers and journeyed through the following data collection and analysis steps, not in a linear but a circular fashion, as we continued to move in and out of one another's stories, weaving in and out and making sense of our own stories in the process. In what follows, we describe the steps of our data collection process.

Step 1: We drafted and restoried three separate but interconnected stories of experiences (henceforth, vignettes) that allowed us to reflect on our identities as mothers in academia. In doing this, we did not give one another any specific guidelines other than to reflect on our experiences as being and becoming mothers in higher education.

Step 2: We shared the stories we drafted; in turn, these shared stories triggered other stories that were buried in us. As we spent time sharing our drafted stories, we noticed overlapping stories of experiences and spontaneously encouraged one another to be open to sharing even the most uncomfortable

experiences.

Step 3: We discussed three overarching themes emerging from our shared vignettes, which allowed us to maximize our vignette to no more than one thousand words per each.

Step 4: Given the themes and focus on mothers in academia, we employed a theoretical perspective highlighting relational cultural theory (RCT) and social role theory to zoom in on these particular areas in the discussion and implication section of our collaborative writing.

Although there are many different ways to design a collaborative writing project such as this, we emphasized our stories of experience (i.e., vignettes) as the starting point in sharing the method of inquiry used for this collaborative writing. In particular, our writing includes excerpts from our mothering experiences at various points in our lives, which ultimately led to three interconnected emerging themes. We move away from the traditional structure of an academic paper by injecting creative headings throughout the chapter and discussing the interconnected three themes in conjunction with some of the insights and strategies that we share with other mothers and mothers-to-be in academia. Moreover, our collaborative writing emphasizes how the act of mothering eventually became the source of empowerment, identity construction, and agency for us. Ultimately, mothering aided us in deconstructing and challenging the dominant paradigm and societal expectations about what constitutes a good mother and replacing it with one in which mothering transcends the caregiver and gatekeeper labels.

Through drafting our vignettes, we also bring to light the perceived workplace discriminations and the lack of institutional support that further complicate the process of identity re/construction as teachers, students, and mothers. Although we describe our coping mechanisms and how we exercised agency to manage mothering and academia, we occasionally leave it to our readers to think of possible solutions, for we are proponents of understanding and embracing multiple ways of knowing. Ultimately, our collective goal is to connect with women in similar situations and to share our subjective truths as many brave women and mothers in academia have done (Guy and Arthur 890). In the next section, we review the body of scholarship that has helped us theorize our stories of experiences.

Situating our Stories in Relational Cultural Theory and Social Role Theory to Demystify Mothering Stereotypes

To ground our experiences, we mainly draw from relational cultural theory (henceforth, RCT). RCT was first developed by Jean Baker Miller in 1976. By 1997, with the contributions of Jean Baker Miller and Pierce Stiver and other multicultural, feminist, and social justice advocates and theorists, RCT was

introduced as a theoretical framework to tackle sociocultural issues that affected mental health and people's growth (Comstock et al.). The RCT is an approach that "is grounded in the idea that healing takes place in the context of mutually empathic, growth-fostering relationships" (Comstock et al. 279). The hallmark of RCT focuses on "growth-fostering relationship," which argues for making sense of one's worthiness. In order for this relationship to be realized, one needs to feel that thoughts and feelings should be heard and understood (Guy and Arthur; West 95). In other words, the cornerstone of RCT is building connections so that we can be heard (Guy and Arthur; Miller and Stiver)

As mothers in academia, Batsheva Guy and Brittany Arthur argue that such connections are a way of developing women's sense of self and maintaining relationships through sharing stories as a hope to develop connections and as "a path out of isolation and disconnections" (890). RCT goes against Western norms that claim growth happens through isolation and independence, but through relationships and connections (Banks; Guy and Arthur). In other words, women, especially mothers in academia, can grow and become stronger through sharing their stories with one another. We can develop our identities through supportive relationships in which we feel heard and understood. Guy and Arthur shared their "vulnerable and authentic dialogue" (890) about their motherhood during the COVID-19 pandemic to develop connections despite being isolated. Grounded in the work of Miller and Stiver's conceptualization of RCT, Guy and Arthur paved a way for other mothers in academia to step out of normalized practices of mothering/womanhood and openly share their experiences of vulnerability and discrimination to promote personal growth as well as supportive relationships both on the personal and public levels. Our goal of drawing from RCT is to shed light on the importance of sharing our vulnerability in order to support and hear each other's voices. We hope that this article inspires women in academia to reflect on and share their stories because our stories matter. We deserve to be heard and understood among our communities.

In conjunction with the work of Guy and Arthur, we also use social role theory (Eagly and Wood), which argues that men and women are assumed to have characteristics that prepare them for "sex-typical roles" (Eagly and Wood 459), yet these roles can always be challenged by women to dismantle societal level discourses and empower other women to do the same. People exercise various gender roles and stereotypes in everyday life by performing certain social tasks, such as parent or employee. These gender roles and stereotypes appear natural and inevitable because they are said to represent innate sex characteristics (Eagly and Wood). These roles and practices continue to exist even though today's modern society claims to show egalitarian gender attitudes. This is evidenced by the massive amount of research conducted in

this area. When we searched for research on gender roles and stereotypes over the last decade, we found hundreds of articles (Castle and Woloshyn; Isgro and Castañeda; Toyibah; Randles; Vigil). Similarly, we got a long list searching for mothering stereotypes and norms (Hampson; Meeussen and Laar; Williams). The research's findings imply that both stay-at-home and working mothers continue to be stereotyped (Castle and Woloshyn; Meeusen and Laar). Thus, creating work-life balance is more challenging for women than men (Hampson; Gorman and Fritzsche; Park and Liao; Toyibah). If a mother is at home, she is unquestionably responsible for providing childcare. Additionally, if she is employed, she must alter her career pursuits and negotiate her circumstances. Mothers have eventually embraced these widely held preconceptions; in fact, they define mothers in most cultures (Park and Liao; Toyibah).

Due to the conventions and expectations placed on mothers, they frequently view childcare as their primary responsibility (Castel and Woloshyn; Newman and Henderson). Joyce Castle and Vera Woloshyn, for example, emphasize that although we talk about gender equity, many women struggle to break free from the assumption that a woman's primary responsibility is that of a caregiver, regardless of whether she is a stay-at-home or a working mother. While this good mother attitude can be detrimental to both stay-at-home and working mothers, it can exacerbate the situation for the latter leading to parental burnout (Meeusen and Laar) and poor performance at work (Castle and Woloshyn; Meeusen and Laar; Vigil). Good mother norms can lead to emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion for working mothers due to their gatekeeping behaviours, such as taking charge of most family tasks from their spouse, which can also lead to poor work-family balance and career ambitions (Meeusen and Laar).

Furthermore, research on mothers in academia demonstrates that mothers who strive hard to achieve success in academia are victims of biases (Williams) and gender stereotypes (Toffoletti and Starr). Additionally, they are discriminated against based on gender and race, resulting in an endless list of cognitive biases (see Williams). For instance, a man's late arrival is often overlooked, whereas if a mother is late, it is always associated with childcare (Williams). The maternal body has also been a concern in the academy (Isgro and Castañeda; see also Tyler), as it is considered messy and "monstrous" (Gatrell).

These gender stereotypes and standards are troublesome. Our testimonials show that intensive mothering norms expect women to focus more on family life and put herself second. Furthermore, maternal gatekeeping behaviours, which involve inhibiting the father's involvement in childcare and other family responsibilities (Allen), can complicate motherhood and trigger other established gender roles. The pandemic has also added extra layers of complexity to mothering (Burk et al.; Minnello et al.; Ségeral), making the

difficulties of balancing motherhood and academic pursuits much more apparent (Langin).

We firmly believe that a shift in the culture of care is necessary; otherwise, mothers will continue to (re)negotiate their family and work life within the framework of good mother norms (Vigil).

Our identities as women, mothers, and students are often shaped by other people: spouses, family members, other-mother scholars, and academic administrators. To this end, we must voice our concerns about workplace racial and gender discrimination and good mother stereotypes. Raising awareness in this direction is critical for understanding that a culture of care (Leininger) at home, in academia, and beyond is necessary for mothers' wellbeing and growth and, importantly, as a way to liberate ourselves from deeply ingrained (good) mothering ideologies and to transcend mothering labels. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to address such questions as "what makes a good mother," we hope that our stories will spark discussion and raise awareness about the need to end the vicious circle of labels and good mothering norms. We begin the next section with a brief self-introduction highlighting who we are as mothers in the academy. We then focus on short vignettes to highlight the three interconnected themes emerging from our shared but diverse stories of experiences in our home and academic lives.

Pooja: Married Mother of Two from Indian Descent

I belong to a conservative Indian Punjabi family, in which women are supposed to do all the household responsibilities, including taking care of the kids. It does not matter if she is working. I grew up watching my mother juggling multiple roles; my father never lent a helping hand to her. My mother raised my brother and me while working as a full-time schoolteacher and a full-time housewife. Although my mothering experiences are quite different from my mother's, being a woman, wife, and a mother, I had to juggle multiple roles in balancing academia and motherhood.

In 2010, I started teaching English to female English learners in Saudi Arabia. A year later, I gave birth to my daughter. It was an emotionally difficult year for me for various reasons—losing my father, being away from my family during pregnancy and childbirth, having a caesarean section, and experiencing physical changes in my body, to name a few. In 2015, I gave birth to my son. Things have been really challenging since I became a mother of two kids. Workplace discrimination, as well unintentional and intentional gender stereotyping, has made this journey much more difficult. Although my overall work experience was positive and my husband and his family were supportive, I was reminded, at times, of my ethnicity, gender roles, and expectations. It is these critical incidents that I share in my narrative and how I navigated them.

Arwa: Single Mother of One from the Middle East

I grew up in a conservative society, in which making personal choices or sharing opinions were uncommon for women. When I was twenty-one, I struggled to get my family's approval to study in Canada. It was my first time travelling outside of my country. I was amazed by the way my teachers treated me. They were excited to hear my voice, but I was never able to participate or express myself. A year later, I moved to Australia, and I graduated with a master's degree. I experienced freedom and independence for the first time at age twenty-two.

In 2012, I came back to Saudi Arabia and started teaching English at a university for almost five years. During that time, I was teaching, supervising, and mentoring according to my university's policies. I was unable to use my skills or my creativity because I had to follow certain protocols. I felt useless so many times, but I never knew what to do.

In 2017, I went through a huge crisis in my life. I got divorced while I was pregnant. I realized that I needed a change that would help me keep moving. I was lucky to receive another scholarship from my university to pursue my second master's degree and my PhD in the United States (US). As a graduate single mother living in a foreign country, I have been through a lot of challenges. I struggle to balance between my motherhood duties and my studies. However, my educational journey in the US has encouraged me to share my voice and to negotiate my identity.

Gloria: Married Mother of One from Korean Descent

I started my tenure track position at a university in central Pennsylvania in 2008. I got married and started a family later in my life because I was focused on earning my doctorate. My entire life was a whirlwind of events. My family and I immigrated to the US at an early age, and we focused on learning the language, navigating the cultural and social norms, and making a life for our family. I never really thought about becoming a mom, but I did want to continue with my education and break away from feeling marginalized due to being in someone else's country and trying to fit in. Even though in my Korean culture, there is an unstated cultural norm that all women should get married at a certain age and not focus so much on their careers or professional trajectory, my parents were somewhat different. They wanted me to continue with my education; in 2003, at thirty-six, I met my husband, who was thirty-four. When we began to imagine and plan for our future, I started to think about what it would be like to have a family. We got married in 2005, and I was almost done with my dissertation. My dissertation defense occurred in 2006, and, finally, I felt that we could start a family, since I had finished my degree.

With a couple of failed pregnancies, I gave birth to our son in 2008, three months before I started my tenure-track position at a public university. Since then, I have been challenged, given my gender, race, and age. Although nothing was directly said to me and the intentions might have been noncoercive, the impact was rather detrimental, as I understood how mothers, especially older first-time moms of different racial and linguistic backgrounds, were negatively perceived in the academy.

Our Vignettes and Emerging Themes

In this section, we discuss our overarching themes through vignettes.

Theme One: Navigating Institutional Expectations, Mothering Norms, and Responsibilities

A caring and supportive work culture can help employees balance work and family life (Kossek et al.; Miller). One of the critical ways to navigate the institutional landscape is to promote a culture of care and support, which can ultimately help women juggle multiple roles (Isgro and Castañeda). Other studies demonstrate that with support from both home and institutions, women can achieve work/family balance, which can help them be more connected to one another and with the institution (Grassetti; Grenier and Burke; Vigil). The question is, though, what does this culture of care entail?

Our lived experiences indicate that a culture of care goes beyond providing the basic amenities to mothers in academia. It involves the following:

- Promoting gender equality at workplaces with regard to salaries, promotions, services, and teaching loads;
- Providing daycare services outside of standard working hours for both professors and student parents; and
- Sharing lived experiences with their students to help them navigate motherhood as well as connecting current students with alumnae for further networking with mothers at different stages of their academic and professional development.

The culture of care also involves self-care activities. It is our responsibility to take care of our wellbeing to give our children the best we can and pursue the careers we enjoy. We need to learn how to take care of ourselves and to release any stress and anger in a healthy way. Louise Hay suggests the following healthy daily routines:

- Add meditation to your daily routine to keep yourselves balanced and energized;
- Let go your old beliefs that hinder your positive progress and block your worthiness;

- Remind yourself that you are "perfect, whole and complete" the way you are! (32)

Theme Two: Navigating Outside Forces, Such As the Global Pandemic

Support from spouses, partners, or other family members can help mothers navigate the challenges during the pandemic and beyond. Spousal support can also act as a way to model children's behaviour. To this end, we extend the definition of culture of care by bringing spousal support into the picture. A culture of care should encompass care from the institution as well as from the family. This culture of care is much needed to model children's behaviour, navigate motherhood challenges, and break gender stereotypes. Importantly, such practices are necessary for creating "me" spaces. To this, we suggest the following:

- Having friendly conversations with your spouse and your family about your feelings and concerns;
- Taking a break from mothering and other obligations and incorporating other family members in the process; and
- Teaching children how to be self-sufficient and care for their fundamental needs, especially boys.

Theme Three: Mothering as a Form of Support for our Students, Modelling for our Children, and Empowerment for Ourselves

Displaying agency and setting examples for others, especially for our children and student mothers, are critical (Grassetti). It is important to note that we, as authors of this work, came together as faculty (Gloria) and students (Pooja and Arwa) who have similar experiences as mothers in higher education. We, especially Pooja and Arwa, became more forthcoming about expressing ourselves and our mothering journeys through this collective experiential writing project. Importantly, reflecting on our mothering experiences has enabled us to recognize that motherhood is a source of empowerment for our children, ourselves, and other newly minted mothers in academia. As such, we encourage mothers in academia to become a conduit of care and power for their students by doing the following:

- Providing academic and emotional support;
- Reflecting on how our voices can be a conduit for understanding our intersectional identities within and beyond the academic walls;
- Focusing more on self-reflexive practices with like-minded colleagues;
- Challenging existing policies to advocate for student mothers, which includes (but is not limited to) allowing them to bring their children to class in the case of emergencies and allowing a leave of absence when their child is sick.

Pooja: Indian Woman with Challenges in Balancing Motherhood and Academia

In her vignettes, Pooja highlights the workplace discrimination she has faced due to her ethnicity and gender stereotypes, which have made her motherhood journey at times difficult. Although she could not do much about the discrimination she faced at the workplace, she went against societal norms and broke gender stereotypes by exercising her agency.

A Non-Arab Expat Mother in Academia: Choose it or Lose it!

Things nearly spiralled out of control in 2015 when I became a mother for the second time. My husband's work-related travel forced me to take on multiple roles. When my husband was not around, I had to pick up my daughter early from her school and drop her off at the university daycare with my son. Initially, it was okay; however, after a while, her school and teacher began complaining. This situation could have been easily handled if my workplace had supported me. But this did not happen. The English instructors in my college had two shifts, one from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and the other one from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Even after many requests to my supervisor and the administration, I was rarely given a morning shift. These shifts were frequently given to Saudi instructors and the program coordinator. All these instructors were either single or had grownup children. I was the only one who had a toddler and who had a genuine reason for wanting to teach in the morning. However, I was treated differently due to my ethnicity. Not only me but also one of my other colleagues from India, who joined after me, was treated in the same way. This was not good enough! After a few months, the university's daycare, which was initially open till 4:00 p.m., reduced its hours to 2:30 p.m. This meant that I had to pick up my children early, which I couldn't do because I was still teaching at that time. Even if I did manage to pick them up, I wasn't allowed to bring them to class. I couldn't do anything but leave my kids with my driver. Kids would just sit in the car and wait for their mommy to finish her shift. As I recall this incident, tears steam from my eyes. Later, I found a private daycare for my kids, but it was too expensive. A lack of culture of care in my institution complicated my journey. It affected me both financially and psychologically. As an expat, I didn't have a choice but to get going.

Am I Not a Conventional Mother?

I have been aware of socially formed gender stereotypes since I was a small child. My mother's lived experiences testify to how gender stereotypes are extensively used in my society. I held on to this concept for a long time because of her perfect mother image, which included balancing numerous roles: mother, teacher, wife, and even student at one point during her teaching

career. She never had any family assistance. I also performed these expectations at various times in my life. To illustrate, I postponed my PhD admission three times before joining it in 2019. However, when I tried to resist these labels and decided to join a doctoral program, my husband and I were continually reminded of our conventional roles. Many people around us (family and friends) told me, "How can you leave your kids with your husband and go to the US to do a PhD?" or "How can your husband take care of them? He is a man."

In 2019, with my husband's and my in-laws' support, I finally came out of this vicious circle of societal norms that treat men and women differently. To pursue my PhD dream, I left my kids with my husband and went to the US.

My PhD and COVID-19

Pursuing a PhD in the midst of COVID-19 was the beginning of another chapter in my mothering journey. It's a story about juggling the intricacies of the pandemic with the demands of my doctoral education. It forced me to again assume the caretaker position; I was back to square one. During the pandemic, my PhD courses shifted online, so I chose to return to my family in Dubai. Since my children's school went online, I was obliged to be with my children the whole day to assist them with their online studies, particularly with my son, who was still too young to adjust to the online learning environment. Juggling my PhD work, my children's online studies, and other family obligations took a toll on my health and sanity. Sleepless nights and busy days without a break almost turned me into a zombie.

To better survive, I decided to create "me" spaces. I began staying up late and working on my dissertation, which I still do now. This meant that I could not wake up early to prepare breakfast for my children and husband or prepare my children for their online studies. A day in the life of a typical sanskari (cultured) Indian bahu (daughter-in-law), patni (wife), and ma (mother) begins with the following: waking up before everyone else, taking a shower, lighting a diya (lamp), saying morning prayers, serving tea to everyone, preparing breakfast, and preparing children for school. However, by exercising agency, I once again defied the traditional image of an Indian woman and a mother that my mother had always modeled for me. I did this not just for myself but also for my daughter, who would be reminded of these gender stereotypes in the future. I also did it for my son, who might perpetuate these myths when he grows up. I did this for everyone.

Arwa: An Arab Single Mother's Challenges

As a single mother, I always have a lot of responsibilities. Being a mother in academia and an international student makes it even more challenging. My journey as a graduate student started in August 2017, when I was seven-months pregnant. When I had my daughter, my mother stayed with me for three months. However, when she left, it was only me and my daughter. As a graduate student, I had classes that started at 2:30 p.m. and at 5:30 p.m. Most daycares close in the evening. I was able to find a daycare that would take care of my daughter in the afternoon but never found a place to take care of her in the evening. Sometimes, I was left with no option other than not going to class or taking my daughter with me to class. That was the most stressful phase of my study life.

Another issue I struggled with was money. Daycares are expensive. I applied for a program at my university that would support me with the daycare fees. Surprisingly, I waited for almost four months, but then they told me that the priority was for bachelor students. I was never able to get it. I felt awful because I was a student like everyone else. I could not have a social life, and I isolated myself from everything and everyone. When my daughter was two years old, I had to put her in a full-time daycare. I paid almost half of my salary every month, but it was a good choice for both of us.

During the last four years, I have experienced fear of not being able to submit my assignments on time and fear of not having enough time to finish all my reading for my classes. I have never discussed any of this with my professors, and I rarely asked for extensions. I was determined to be like any other student. However, I was and am still scared of not meeting my professors' expectations. One day, I had a meeting with one of my great professors to discuss my paper. He said, "Why are you always apologizing when you submit your papers? You are a good writer." I was shocked because I had never noticed that until he said it to me. I thought about it for a minute and answered him, "Because I can do better." He provoked me to think about what "do better" means to me. Why has my work never been enough for me?

My professor's question was just something that he noticed, and he wanted me to appreciate what I was doing. I knew that I spent hours looking for resources, and it took me a week or so writing that paper, but no matter what I did, it was always not enough. My biggest challenge was organizing my time and creating a balance between myself, my family, and my education. I struggled a lot, especially during the pandemic when my daughter's daycare was closed for a couple of months, and I had to study from home. It was a huge distraction, but it was also my spiritual awakening journey. I had to face myself, my fears, and my weaknesses. It was a turning point in my life.

Discrimination Kills Talents!

In 2013, I was hired as an English instructor at a university in Saudi Arabia. I worked hard to get that position permanently in 2016. During my years at that university, I was able to prove myself as a hard-working teacher, which had given me the chance to work as a coordinator for one of the English business courses offered by the English Language Center (ELC) there. I also worked as a tutor to help students with low grades to facilitate lessons and encourage them to pass their courses. Just as Pooja suffered from discrimination, I did too. Before I was permanently hired, I was on a contract, which did not go very well. I was always treated differently from other teachers, even though I had the same degree and same nationality. The only difference was that I was hired by a company, not by the university. I was given more work and less money. I was asked to cover other teachers' classes. On my off days, they would call me and bring me in for proctoring instead of those who could not come. I was not able to complain because I wanted to work and build a future career. Two years later, I got hired permanently, and I was finally able to experience some privileges.

Gloria: Korean American Woman's Motherhood in Academia

Gloria highlights several interconnected events that compelled her to reflect on being a new mom in her first tenure track faculty position (Park, "My Autobiographical Poetic Rendition," *Narratives of East Asian Women*). These narratives have been written and published elsewhere, and instead of direct excerpts, she restoried them during the collective writing into a poetic rendition as shared below:

Dark and Dubious Daycare

My husband and I entered this particular daycare, it was lunch time…
A dark room, with baby dining chairs pushed against one of the walls;
I couldn't peel my eyes away from the toddlers sitting in their dining chairs…
Some using their tiny fingers to pick up food
some just staring at us as strangers
Some their face down on the food tray…
taking their afternoon zzzzz…
It is so unclean, disorganized, how could this be a daycare…??

Even before I locked my eyes with Kevin's, I asked myself, "How can I leave my three-month-old at a place like this? Maybe, I am not meant to be here working full time as a professor?" These types of all-or-nothing thinking continued to emerge as we checked out daycares in the community.

Although it is difficult to imagine such a place exists as a daycare, even after

fourteen years, it is still part of my consciousness that had haunted me for the first few years of my journey in academia, given the images of darkness and unsanitary condition of the daycare. Fortunately, through a colleague's mom, we found a perfect place for our son, and then he was enrolled in the university daycare when he was seven months old. These horrible images of certain daycares we visited brought back other memories of how I navigated my mothering and my professor identities. Below are two interconnected snapshots of narratives that have been re-storied from Park (2013).

Sensing, Feeling, Living

Gloria further questioned her identity as a credible and productive teacher-scholar; you see, mothers are seen as mothers first then scholars in academia, where the perception is that one cannot do both very well. Given this mindset, my salary and other benefits were compromised when I first started my faculty position.

What does it mean to be a new mom of a three-month-old child in my first tenure track position?

I sensed the indirect attack on my newly minted motherhood…

I felt it…

I lived it…

Why would there even be a question of me being less productive?

… less competitive?

In a capitalistic society, even though we are in it for educating the future democratic citizens, I sensed that I was offered below my well-deserved salary…

Did I not fight for what I deserved because I also bought into this societal level discourse and felt that I could not live up to the expectations of highly productive teaching and scholarship?

Perhaps, I was scared that I couldn't do it…

Irony of all ironies, even though I was perceived as less than… I was comfortable being at my institution because of the type of work and the students' needs, and to me, those things validated my worth.

Three Sections, One Teaching Prep

Gloria's teaching load and prep were also monitored and decided for me during my first semester.

Given your daycare needs, you are receiving a Tues/Thurs schedule …

Translates into one prep teaching load in semester one.

How wonderful and considerate?

I enjoyed teaching three sections of undergraduate research writing my first semester,

But what about graduate teaching?

Wasn't I hired to teach TESOL teacher education courses?

I was not given any graduate course teaching in my specialization.

I reflected on the administrator's decision and started to think that perhaps, my identity as a new Mom, a woman of colour, or other visible identity categories had something to do with this decision.

Yes, I was grateful, but one administrator also thought that I would not be able to do the graduate teaching work because of my need to put my mothering identity first. In this thinking, moms, especially new moms, cannot do both well. In this particular scenario, graduate education is placed on a pedestal, and undergraduate writing courses can take some hits, especially by those in challenging identity positions, such as myself as a new mom. Although some may think this is ludicrous, now that I am a program director and one of the most senior faculty members in my program, I believe in having a conversation with those in positions of less power and vulnerability. Thinking back, it would have been worthwhile to have had a choice in the matter of my course selection. I might have taught three sections of the same undergraduate writing course, or I might not have. The point here is that the administrator took that choice away from me by stating that I was going to teach three sections.

Moving Forward

Just as these experiences are legitimate and valid experiences in themselves, the more we share them in public spaces, the more we can raise critical awareness of these discriminatory practices in the academy. Whether these acts are intentional or unintentional are beside the point; their effects are real. Higher education communities need and can do better to raise awareness that parenting is both partners' responsibility.

It is important to teach youngsters about demystifying taken-for-granted gender roles. To do this, we must reconceptualize our thoughts regarding mothering standards and abstain from acting and performing according to societal level discourses that privilege certain ways of thinking about gender roles. Fathers contributing to family duties can also serve as an example for children, guiding them away from problematic assumptions. As our experiences illustrate, unlearning gender assumptions requires a great deal of courage, support, and time. As a result, it is vital to establish these principles early on. But how are we going to do that? In theory, frequent informal conversations with children can help teach them that both parents can do similar household chores as well as perform caretaking responsibilities.

As stated earlier, this collective experiential writing has been both therapeutic and empowering. We see it as a productive way to uplift mothers

in academia. We encourage you to take a stance and engage in this continuous movement forward.

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