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Anna S. CohenMiller, Casey Schachner, Nathalie Ségeral,
Poh Tan, Alexandra Kisitu, Mairi McDermott and many more

Unseen Roles of Women during COVID-19: How the Echo of an “Mummy, I Love You” from a Six-Year-Old during a Zoom Meeting Redefined Mothering

I was in my last year of my doctoral studies, my children's school plans were scheduled, and I had just begun a new research collaboration when COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. My roles as a mother, researcher, and educator, which once segregated by time and place, collided when our university closed. Every aspect about each role merged, and my professional and personal world collided in an online meeting. This is a visual essay consisting of photographs, artwork, and poetry collected during the pandemic as I journeyed through my doctoral journey at home. I invite the reader to read my spoken words aloud and allow your experiences and emotions as a mother(parent), a researcher, and educator to permeate the space around you.

This visual essay presents photographs of the messiness of my role as a mother, a researcher, and an educator. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, each of the roles I practiced in my life was quite separate. My mothering role was usually constrained to mealtimes, after-school activities, weekend school projects, bedtime stories, and kisses before bedtime. My researching role was confined to the university, where I attended weekly meetings with fellow researchers, collected data, and wrote quietly. My educating role meant meeting my students during planned office hours, teaching weekly classes, and conducting thesis coaching workshops. These three roles were defined and segregated and never seemed to converge in place or time. My role as a mother was not visible to my colleagues when I was researching and my role as researcher was not visible when I was mothering. After COVID-19 became a pandemic mothers like me were asked to work from home, and, quickly, my role as a mother, researcher, and educator converged and was made visible after the echo of my

six-year old son's "Mummy, I love you" was heard over a Zoom meeting. In this visual essay, I present a combination of images and textual parts of the "messiness" of my role in mothering, researching, and educating. These images and texts were collected and documented after COVID-19 became a pandemic to reveal how each role informed the other, and, more importantly, how these roles were made visible to inform and disrupt a patriarchal working system.

When I first read Joanne Detore-Nakamura's chapter "Dissertation Distress: A Room of One's Own with a Crib and a Computer," I was considering going back to graduate school to pursue a second doctorate, this time in education. I was eight-months pregnant with my second son and thoughts of research, fulltime work, elder caregiving, and writing with two young children seemed impossible to balance and achieve. But my heart struggled to reconcile my desire to pursue an academic path and my commitment to being a good mother. Like Detore-Nakamura's feelings of guilt, my feelings of guilt for my academic pursuits were equal in magnitude to my feelings of guilt for neglecting my two young children. After long discussions with my husband, we decided I would go back to school to pursue my passion for research in science education. My true inspiration for pursuing graduate work in this field came from the birth of my older son, who challenged my views of motherhood and questioned my worldviews.

It was the fall of 2013 when I decided to apply for graduate school in a program that was not my expertise. I spent many weeks researching educational philosophy and science education journal articles to give me enough insight and background to write an academically sound personal statement to be included with my application. In between sleepless nights, breastfeeding, diaper changes, and minding a four-year old, I successfully completed my application for graduate school the following year. Up until March 2020, before COVID-19 had been declared a pandemic in British Columbia, my research, teaching, working, and mothering had its place, or, at least, I felt each was separate enough that snack time and pretend play occurred at home, researching and writing happened mostly on campus, and working happened in the office. Time, place, and distance seemed to keep my roles as a mother, researcher, and educator separate. On March 16, 2020, my university closed, and everyone was asked to work from home; public schools announced they were closing for the rest of the school year. Public libraries also closed, and children were prohibited from accessing public playgrounds; community centers cancelled all spring and summer camp programs. Chaos, panic, uncertainty, doubt, fear, anger, sadness, futility, frustration, and Zoom took over our household. I was inspired by Elizabeth Ashworth's work on cathARTic, which is "a way to share personal and professional layers of [the] academic journey" (459) through a blending of text and imagery. I was specifically drawn to this approach because words alone cannot easily

demonstrate the magnitude of love and patience I experienced from my family as I mother, research, and educate. This visual essay presents images, textual expressions, and art created by me and my children to show the reader the messiness of being a mother, researcher, and educator at home during a pandemic. I invite the audience to read the text out loud and experience their emotions and reflections through the images.

The Scholar Space

Working at/in/from home

Clutter, chaos, messiness

How can I hide my background?

*What else can I get my kids to do while I am
in a meeting?*

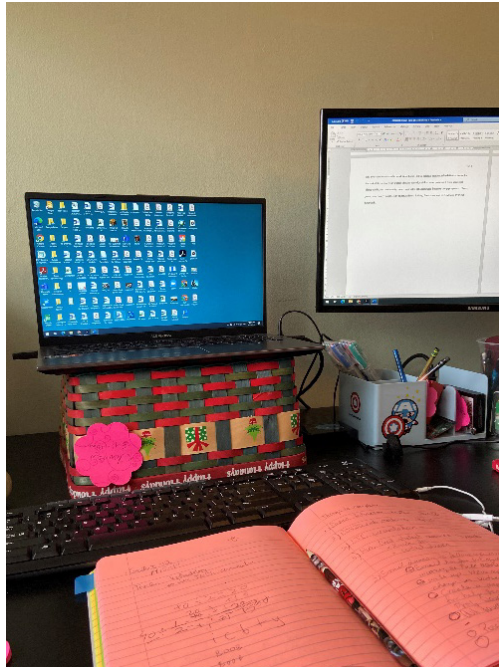
What would they think if my son comes in?

When can I take a break?

What should I make for lunch?

Where is the cat?

Is this scholarly?

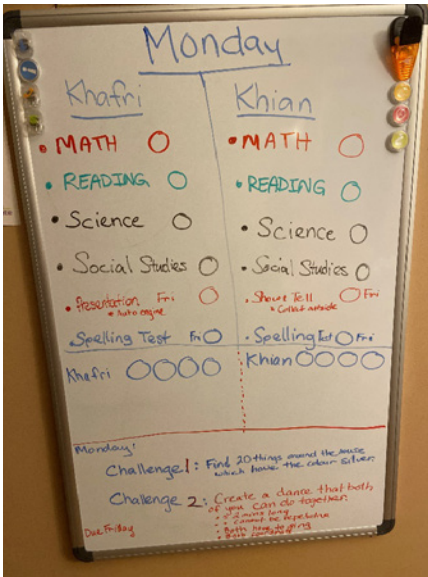


My home office is a cluttered desk space.

Keeping Up Expectations and ...

*I must keep things in place, and
I cannot miss that meeting,
My kids must keep up their learning.
The whiteboard must be filled.*

*What are other parents doing?
What is the best time to Zoom?
I am not a teacher, but my kids must learn?
Must schedule clean up hour after dinner!
Must schedule for tomorrow! They must be
learning during school time.*



Left: An example of a daily scheduling as an attempt to be organized from March to April 2020; Right: Project 1: Arts project. Learning to sew.



Left: Project 2: Science experiment. Learning about chromatography; Right: Keeping up with extracurricular lessons after breakfast.



Project 3: Problem-solving project using engineering ideation. Building a 45° racetrack with limited materials.

... and Becoming Exhausted and Frustrated

*Overwhelmed
Over exhausted
Over worked
Over expected.*

*Who's expectations? Who is watching? Who is checking? Why am I overworked?
Who is making me feel overwhelmed? Are my peers overwhelmed as well?*

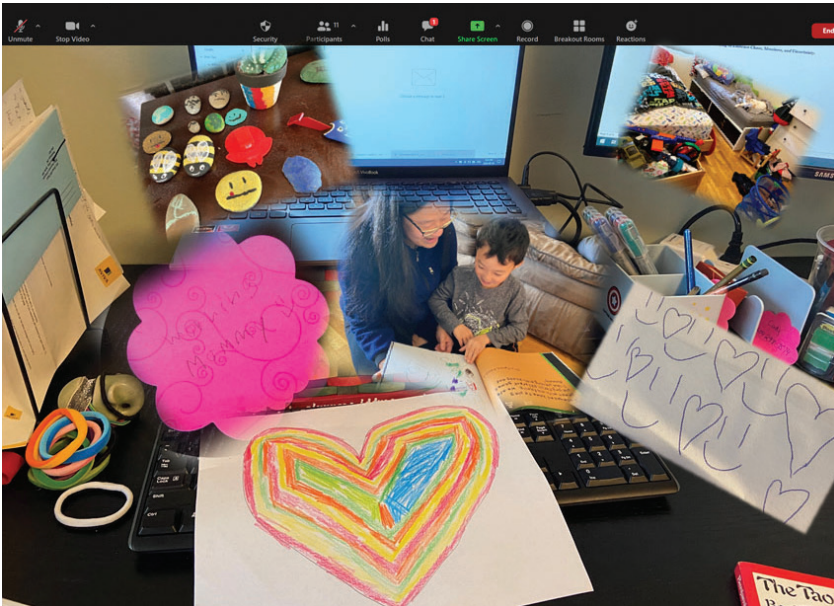
Who is watching anyway?

Who is counting?

*I need a break, a breather, I want to build projects with my children, I want to
explore experiments with them, I do not have time for that whiteboard.*

Where are MY hugs and kisses?

**Learning to Embrace Chaos, Messiness, Uncertainty as a Mother,
Researcher, and Educator**



A Critical Moment of Reflection, Acceptance, Vulnerability, and Love.

May 21, 2020

1:17pm PST

Zoom Meeting

I was presenting my work and research to my colleagues.

My office door was closed.

I hear a slight creaking as the door slowly opened, and I quickly waved my hand off camera to gesture my son to leave the office.

I sensed his presence still without turning my head, and again, shook and waved my hand hoping he would leave the office.

"Mummy! I love you! Mummy!" he spoke loudly and swiftly pulled the door closed.

I quickly turned my head but only heard his footsteps dissipate as he ran away.

I smiled. My colleagues smiled.

I paused.

My heart is full.

"I love you too, my little bean!" I called aloud.

Note: All photographs were taken by the author.

Works Cited

- Ashworth, Elizabeth. "cathARTic: A Journey into Arts-Based Educational Research." *International Journal of Education through Art*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2015, pp. 459-66.
- Detore-Nakamura, Joanne. "Dissertation Distress: A Room of One's Own with a Crib and a Computer." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2003, pp. 57-61.

