

**Sharing Stories of Mothering, Academia and the COVID 19 Pandemic:
Multiple Roles, Messiness and Family Wellbeing**

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Abstract: The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused disruption. Responsibilities increased especially for people who identify as mothers needing to balance work and caring for their child(ren). Through the use of personal narratives, we explored our experiences as mothers who work in academia. The purpose of this commentary is to explore the commonalities of our experiences of trying to maintain the multiple roles and responsibilities demanded from us as mothers and academics during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two themes emerged: multiple roles and responsibilities and embracing the ‘messiness’. The need to take on multiple roles simultaneously such as working from home and parenting was challenging. Embracing the ‘messiness’ demonstrated that caring for our children while working from home caused their needs and our time to focus on them to be compromised. Our work and productivity were impacted with minimal available support but this was not acknowledged within the business as usual practices of the university. The conditions that negatively impact us, also negatively impact our children. Children have needed to adjust to pandemic conditions and their support has been compromised due to the other competing demands mothers face. As academics, our future work will be informed and shaped from this experience, and so too will the growth and development of our children. Our experiences from this pandemic highlight the gendered inequities present within academia and the potential negative effects on child well-being. We call attention to this issue to help promote change and advocate for mothers working in academia and elsewhere.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Mothering, Academia, Women’s Mental Health, Pandemic Impacts on Children, Work Life Balance, Gender Inequity

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Introduction

It is Monday morning and I have been trying to find time to write and share some personal experiences of mothering and academia amidst the COVID-19 pandemic since last Wednesday. This is a perfect example of what seems to be my story during the past 17 months. As a single mother of two teenagers, the majority of my days during the pandemic have been spent supporting my children's personal, educational, psychological and physical needs while my career simmers on the backburner. There was no choice in the matter as life had shifted more than anyone could have ever imagined (Author B).

This description of balancing the demands of mothering and academia during the pandemic from one of the authors reflects a common situation shared by many women working in academia during the pandemic. COVID-19 brought a sudden shift in our ways of living together and working. For women across the globe care responsibilities increased inequitably compared to men (Boncori, 2020; Górska et al., 2021). Within academia, the scholarly and research productivity of women was significantly affected due to the dual roles they play in balancing the demands of academia and parenting, threatening the hard-earned gender-equity achievements made over the past few decades (Beech, et al., 2021; Oleschuk, 2020; Viglione 2020). Equally concerning has been the damaging impact of the pandemic on child and youth development and mental health and the known protective factors provided by parents who are available to nurture and support children during stress (Cost et al., 2021; Gadermann et al., 2021). As people who identify as women who are mothers, academics, and health researchers, we exist at a professional and personal intersection of these concerns. It is well known that women's care work is essential to the social infrastructure of society and that this work is often kept in the background of their professional lives (Ferrant et al., 2014; Power 2020). Certain workplaces account for this 'other background life' more than others. Academia is a particular kind of workplace with demands and traditions that have always been oriented towards a certain template of a 'successful academic'. This academic is someone able to dedicate focus and time to productive academic work. It is a life assumed to be free of interdependencies and thus care responsibilities are not acknowledged in the

institutional norms and processes. While this issue has been discussed previously (Heijstra et al., 2015; Probert, 2005), for many the pandemic brought to light the inequitable gendered distribution of care work and the effects this could have on academic productivity (Boncori, 2020; Górska et al., 2021). This loss of productivity is a major concern for both institutions and mothers in academia, but perhaps less discussed are the impacts these demands for productivity during the pandemic had on family and child well-being. It was this concern that brought us, a group of nursing scholars with diverse work and family responsibilities, together with a goal to find a way to make these realities more visible. We use this paper as an opportunity to explore the commonalities of our experiences in trying to maintain the multiple roles and responsibilities demanded of us as mothers and academics. We also consider how our attempts to manage the messiness of our lives had implications for family and child well-being as well as our own scholarly work, calling attention to the enduring structural barriers present within the care economy and academia, and their world-making effects. Institutional ethics approval was not required for this personal reflective work.

Situating Ourselves

Hall (2020) recognizes the everyday life as a critical point from which to examine the feminist project "a site where power relations, inequalities, and social differences are played out, lived, experienced, felt, remembered, imagined, and represented; in and across difference spaces and societies, practices, and relationships" (p.813). In this paper we share stories of everyday experience that represent our complex lives; these stories are always partial and situated and never capable of accounting for a whole. Each of us has a different journey of motherhood and academia that the pandemic brought unique challenges to. It is in these situated unique stories of mothering in academia during a pandemic that one can find the moments that intersect between us. To facilitate a greater understanding of the complexities of our lives, we begin with a brief introduction to our stories.

Author A

I am a mother to two children aged five and ten, an assistant professor on the tenure track, and a doctoral student currently at the candidacy stage of my program. The precarious balance of mothering and academia began for me during my initial doctoral program when I gave birth to my first child one week before my comprehensive exams. One-week postpartum, I sat in one room meeting with my comprehensive committee while my newborn lay in my partner's arms outside the room. From that time onward, managing academia, work, and family became a balancing act. Constantly needing to adapt to the ever-changing routine of a baby or toddler and carving out time for deep thinking and writing felt like an impossible task comparable to climbing Everest. I withdrew from my doctoral program because I was not equipped to climb that mountain. I realized that having a child as a graduate student despite good intentions and attempts to be supportive was not a favorable combination. It was as though I was getting punished for being a woman and a mother.

After my second child was older, I finally felt that I had the support in place in both personal and professional life to return to my doctoral studies. I could now leave base camp and begin the ascent to my "Everest". Within six months of returning to school, the pandemic caused significant public health measures to be put into place, and I found myself where I was before. Once again, my supports were gone.

Author B

I am an Associate Professor and a single mother to two teenagers ages 14 and 18. My life as a woman in academia began 13 years ago during the pregnancy of my second child. This path was not perfectly planned as starting a PhD while working full time during an early pregnancy poses many challenges physically and psychologically. At the time, I embraced my new journey and was able to balance my life as a mother, nurse, educator and graduate student. I continued to navigate my way through completion of my doctoral work, a new career as an Assistant Professor, and mother of two children. The path has not always been clear, nor has it been easy to manage. In the span of ten years, life has changed considerably and unfortunately my career has

been the first in line to bear the brunt of these challenges; losing parents, divorce as well as personal and familial mental health challenges have all taken a toll on certain academic pursuits. The road within academia has not been without its ups and downs. However, I had learned a great deal about myself and what I need to succeed in an environment that is often competitive, individualistic, and taxing. I had learned to create a safe, supportive and productive space for myself within this world. And then came COVID-19.

Author C

I am an Assistant Professor recently hired into a tenure track position after several years of postdoctoral and sessional work. I am also a mother to three daughters (a nine year old and two young adults). My experience with mothering and academia began in 2007 when I decided to pursue my graduate studies in Canada leaving my husband and daughters behind in Ghana. It was a tough decision to move to Canada without my family, however, I called them every day on the phone to make sure they were doing well. While in frequent contact with them the difficulties of mothering from afar and studying were very challenging at times. After completing my Master's degree, I began my Doctoral studies pregnant and had my third child here in Canada and have balanced mothering my daughters while completing my PhD, post-doctoral work and the many bridging requirements for RN licensure of internationally educated nurses in Canada.

For the first two years of being an assistant professor, I have been balancing my teaching workload and family obligations. It was challenging to save time and energy to work or engage in other scholarly activities which are also a vital component of my career. When the pandemic hit it required sharing home workspace and internet with my family. As well as being responsible for ensuring my 9-year-old completed her online schooling and homework. Eighteen (18) months later, the pandemic goes on and I continue to juggle the needs of my family with the demands of teaching and building my research program.

Author D

I am an Associate Professor and early career academic who recently completed her PhD. I am also a mother to two children both 20 years old: A son who is away at university and a daughter with autism who lives at home. I had early ambitions for an academic career that were sidetracked by different parenting responsibilities related to my daughter’s disability, and I often told myself “You don’t have the life for academia”. Eventually, I found myself in an academic teaching role and a PhD program; I was completing data collection for my dissertation study when the pandemic began. Immediately, my daughter’s school closed, the community support we relied on for distributing some of my daughter's care somehow evaporated overnight, a silent victim of the coronavirus. The world got very small very fast. So, I rebuilt the house of cards that are our care arrangements and worked from home, teaching online and finishing my dissertation while providing her supervision.

Common Experiences

Experience is personal; it is but one story yet may also bring to light commonalities among individuals. These commonalities became evident as we shared our backgrounds and stories of being a woman in academia during the COVID-19 pandemic. We learned of the toll our situations took (and are taking) on mothering our children, as well as the great impact this has had on each of our families’ well-being. The recognition that we shared familiar experiences was comforting and made clear that we were not alone in our struggles. Although there are differences in our past and present lives, there were common themes within our personal experiences that resonated. Competing demands of our care work for family and our professional work were amplified and made more visible as a result of the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. These common themes include (1) the multiple roles and responsibilities we hold and (2) acknowledging and embracing the “messiness” which has become our everyday. Our intent is to explore the commonalities that we observed with our experiences as they point out the numerous complexities of mothering in academia during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of this on family well-being as a whole.

Multiple roles and responsibilities

Author A

Ask a mother what the job description of a mother is and you may get a long list including chef, custodian, chauffeur, teacher, and many others. This also includes ‘manager’. I sign off on most homework assignments for my children, organize extracurricular activities, manage bedtime and so on. However, during the pandemic I realized how all the roles of being a mother are challenged when all my other roles outside of parenting came into the home. Although many of us balance multiple roles, the pandemic created the inability to compartmentalize them. In some regard, it was nice spending my lunch break with my kids and not commuting to work. But what made it complicated was the need to be four people at the same time. I needed to be a student, faculty member, mother, and spouse. In academia, people will often bring their work home; marking papers, answering emails on the weekend, writing and doing research. The pandemic changed this as bringing work home was no longer a choice. I could never opt to leave my work at work because it was with me always. My kids were with me always, and so were the pressures of my doctoral program. In some instances, I found myself teaching a class and then quickly muting my microphone so I could help one of my children. It had become clear to me that the pandemic highlighted a precarious balance between how mothers care for their families and achieving success in academic pursuits.

Author B

In retrospect, the very beginning of the pandemic was the most positive time for our family during the past year and a half. At that time, the world had shut down and life was literally put on hold. It was as though we were frozen in time with all the stress and responsibilities of school and work left behind; it was a time of unknowing and we clung to each other for support and comfort. These feelings did not last long as real life crept in slowly and insidiously. The roles that we were able to step away from for a short time were reemerging and as a mother I needed to take control. Our home had now become a school and an office with my children doing online schooling and myself teaching online classes. All

research activities that were not COVID-19 related at my university were put on hold, this included my own.

I found myself living multiple lives during the day bouncing from one room to the next, shifting from professor, to junior high school teacher, to counsellor, to housekeeper. Often these roles overlapped or perhaps co-existed during zoom meetings and phone calls. Eventually, something has got to give and unfortunately as was in the past, it became my academic work. I was doing the best that I could under the circumstances, but there are only so many hours during the day. I could see my colleagues and peers on Zoom meetings and wondered how they were coping during this time? What were their lives like behind the camera? Was I alone in feeling overwhelmed, isolated and less productive than usual? I found myself worrying about my children, my students, and my career trajectory as I was in the process of applying for tenure. I also began to question what institutional support and guidance was available for women academics who found themselves in the same positions as myself. Had expectations changed for us at this time, or was the university and faculty maintaining the status quo pre-pandemic? The repercussions of an academic life affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are multiple, including paused research and research progression, writing of manuscripts. funding applications processes, publication, cancelled conferences, and student teaching both graduate and undergraduate. These repercussions were amplified when coupled with the responsibilities of mothering during this health crisis as the divide between home and work became blurred.

Author C

I usually make my daughter breakfast and pack her lunch for school, then after she leaves I get prepared and ready for my own classes. After school, I help my daughter with her homework and ensure that she completes her work. While elementary schools held online classes due to COVID-19 public health guidelines, I had to keep an eye on my daughter to make sure she focused on her online classes and not play games! In our home, I also have two adult daughters who are pursuing their undergraduate degrees at university who also had to take classes online. As an Assistant Professor, I also had to be cognizant of how some students expressed

their concerns regarding the effect of the pandemic on their academic and psychological well-being. Having this in mind, I had to quickly put myself together as a mother, as well as an academic in order to support my daughters' psychologically to achieve their educational needs.

As a new faculty member from a visible minority group and from another country, I was in the process of connecting with colleagues and learning the culture of my university when COVID-19 emerged. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic distorted this ambition to some extent as we halted meeting face-to-face with both students and colleagues. Additionally, since we were notified that our classes would be conducted online in the next academic year, I had to use my vacation hours in the summer to prepare and record all my lectures for the coming academic year. I wanted to ensure that I gave my best to meet the goals of the University. Although I had wonderful colleagues who were willing to support me, things were not the same when communicating with them online. For me, those moments were challenging as I felt isolated trying to balance my role as a mother, wife, and a woman from a minority group in academia.

Author D

The announcement came that we would be in a sort of lockdown with schools closed, university classes switched online and suddenly we were all home together. My husband who worked for the schools was of course immediately worried about finances and the plummeting stocks did not help his anxiety. My son's plans for the future and my disabled daughter's precious routine and supports literally vanished. For me though there were many things to do. I needed to convert my courses to online format, there were meetings to attend and a research study that needed adjusting. I also had elderly parents to surveil and unsuccessfully convince to stay at home. While the simple tasks of my work and their urgency were grounding to me, there were other things that seemed to require too much concentration like an article I was working on and a dissertation that need to be started. I had to let those fall to wayside – telling myself that for now I just needed to “get through”. By May the academic year came to a close and the world opened up a little more. Everyone was still at home still but I felt I should get back to my dissertation. I also felt

responsible for structuring my daughter's day, something previously done by school and other community supports. My husband had developed symptoms of long COVID-19 with related cardiac issues adding worry and occasional trips to emergency rooms and reallocation of responsibilities to my overflowing plate of responsibilities. I began writing my dissertation and designing online modules for the fall, sometimes waking at 4 am to get some quiet time alone to work. This allowed more time later in the day for me to try and structure my daughter's time with an activity so she wasn't just sitting on the couch watching TV. While the work was constant it was disjointed and often unfocused. In the fall, my application for promotion was due, the Dean warned anyone applying should be sure to show how we were able to 'pivot' their teaching and research programs - listening to this idea of a simple step sideways made me laugh out loud and wonder if I was living the same reality as my colleagues.

Getting Messy

Author A

If life was messy before the pandemic, the pandemic made it a disaster.

As I write this, I recognize the privilege in my ability to keep my job, be home, and keep my children home is one that makes me appreciate this messiness or disaster. Often the attempts to check off boxes, do my job, be a mom, and a graduate student, left my bucket completely empty. Mental health suffered at the expense of our family's decision on how we could best keep everyone in the household safe. I could see my colleagues, friends, and family struggling as well. This created a cycle of feeling the need to support, but not having much left to give.

By January, my children were tired of being home with me but unable to access me, they were tired of not interrupting meetings or classes. By spring, our tiredness extended into discouragement. I was empty and could no longer manage the messiness. I did an intense spring cleaning in my house- perhaps as a means to help clean and organize the perceived messiness and disorder that the pandemic has brought on. I remember re-organizing my kid's toys and feeling guilty that I was spending the

day focusing on my family's needs and not my school work. This feeling of guilt persisted. If I was spending time on my computer doing work or school work, I felt guilty for not spending time with my family and vice versa. Our careers have demands and expectations that we need to continue to meet, our family continues to have needs. There is no pause button that we can push to catch up.

Author B

The COVID-19 pandemic forced most educational and research activities in post-secondary education to function online. As a result, the divide that previously existed between home and work life began to disappear. It became more and more difficult to display the same degree of professionalism during meetings or teaching classes while children were yelling in the background, pets were popping in and out of zoom calls, and artifacts of our personal lives were on full display for all to see. The expectations surrounding this overlap of life and work in real-time on-screen were never really discussed by the institution, but I assumed that we were to maintain the same degree of professionalism as in person. This was not to be. One winter morning while taking part as an examiner in a candidacy exam online, my dog proceeded to rip a pillow to shreds behind me leaving mountains of fluff for all to see. This live wrestling match interrupted the exam as there was no ignoring the carnage going on behind me in my home! It was at this point that I decided to accept the messiness; the mess of my room, the mess of working online in a home with children, the mess of feeling uncertain...the mess of being human. I allowed myself to be messy in front of my students and my colleagues, as there was no way of hiding my life on screen. These experiences have forever changed me as an academic in how I see myself in relation to my teaching and research. I now see even more strongly the importance in sharing my vulnerabilities and challenges within my teaching and research with students and colleagues in order to form reciprocal trusting relationships.

Author C

As a result of COVID-19 and working from home, I converted the use of my dining room into my work space. I did not have office space in my home so the

dining room was my new office. I had papers and books all over my dining table which prevented my household members from using the table for eating. Also, my dining table was close to my kitchen and family members could be seen during my online classes when they came to the kitchen to pick something or to eat or cook. They would usually ask me if I was on camera or not which determined whether they should come to the kitchen or go back to their room and stay hungry just a little longer.

The reception of my home internet fluctuated with the competing demands in the household. My two adult daughters also used the internet for their online classes and academic activities, which impacted my classes with interrupted sound or frozen screens. I often found myself moving from place to place in my home just to get good internet reception.

There is also a brighter side of working from home. Before the COVID-19 pandemic and online classes, I had to wake up early to prepare my daughter for school then catch the bus myself to be on time to campus. I would sometimes review my class materials on the bus before getting to the university. Teaching online classes removed the time it took to travel to work and gave me more time to prepare and review materials at home before the class began. On the negative side, online classes require “being present at home” at the same time “not being present” for the family when working online at home. There was an instance when I had to start an online class before my daughter left for school. I usually prepare my daughter for school, hug her and say goodbye. However, whenever I had early morning online classes, I rushed through the preparations and miss the goodbye hugs. One day, we missed the hugs and when she got to school with her dad, she sent a message through her dad to “tell mummy I love her”. This really touched me and I realized she had noticed that I was “not being present” even though I was physically there before she left for school.

Author D

Life was busy as always but the boundaries that I often worked hard to maintain were becoming blurred.

My scholarly work is on care and despite knowing that this interest was for me not only academic but also

personal it was the first time I think I let the two worlds of care merge – I couldn’t keep them separate, I couldn’t write about the entanglement of care in my participants’ lives and not reflect on the entanglement within my own. I think this was actually generative for me as a scholar theoretically. My work has deepened in a way as I integrate my own care work into my scholarly work; despite this deepening, there was also a slowing of its productivity. Six weeks after my defense I was offered a new job at a new university, back on the tenure track with lots of opportunities for research and even more expectations to meet. My daughter is still home with me as I work on getting some papers out from my dissertation before the fall teaching begins. I wonder about the future and if things will get less messy. In the first meeting with a new research team, I refrain from disclosing my caregiver status and instead share my theoretical stance towards studying care. It is safer right now to keep these identities apart as I am new to this group and not sure how to explain my messy life.

Despite the scholarly insights I recognize myself now as a distracted mother and scholar. Working from home full-time exacerbated this, there was less of a clean break between home and work. My children have to seek out my attention or wait for those moments of mindfulness where I intentionally check in with them. I had no dreams of being a perfect mom but I am not sure this is even the “good enough” mother I wanted to be. While I can intellectually rationalize this, I am left dissatisfied and disappointed in myself both as a parent and as an academic.

Discussion

Our experiences of mothering during the COVID-19 pandemic show multiple stories and concerns of how our families were impacted. Crook (2020) predicted the pandemic would be a challenging time for parents needing to navigate lack of childcare and working from home; what started as a quiet time where the world shut down, turned into chaos. During the pandemic, women were often interrupted while working, impacting productivity, and exacerbating an already challenging situation (Crook, 2020). As well, women have had more challenges compared to their male counterparts facing disruptions in their work during the pandemic (Crook,

2020; Power, 2020). Our children also experienced changes in how we managed day-to-day. For example, we discussed increased screen time, to help minimize disruptions during meetings or while teaching class. Although this is discouraged and writing by various experts provides a variety of parenting techniques (Karki et al., 2020), it was not always feasible to enforce.

Workplace demands did not shift and often the work increased as we were tasked with teaching in a new format. Once the expectation of needing to continue to work became evident it highlighted the hidden care work of parenting that many women face (Crook, 2020). We found that because of public health restrictions not only were we working from home but our families were home as well. All of our jobs now needed to be managed simultaneously but with limited resources. The work at home was not new but the merging of worlds traditionally kept separate by academia created new conflicts and although we were home, we were not always able to be present.

Our stories demonstrate not only how COVID-19 impacted our lives, but also those of our children. Because of the constraints placed on us as working mothers, our parenting was deeply impacted as well. This is also supported in the literature as Roos et al. (2021) suggest that the pandemic has led to children being exposed to lower quality parenting. Family spaces within our homes became workspaces, children had more 'screen time', and although we were home, we were not readily available to them. Our children needed to wait to ask a question and be quiet during meetings. Although we were present, we could not always attend to their needs. Questions like 'when is COVID going to be over' or ignoring rules and disrupting meetings demonstrated how our children and families struggled with our need to balance. Although we agreed that a life in academia means that work does not always stay in the office, the challenges COVID-19 brought onto our families were different. Throughout this pandemic, we all acknowledged that disruptions were felt by each family member. We were (and continue to be) stressed parents, parenting stressed children, within a stressed family. This ongoing condition of increased stress is concerning given the emerging evidence of the effects of the pandemic on children, youth, family, and women's

mental health in Canada (Cost et al, 2021; Gadermann et al, 2021; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2020). Cohodes and Gee (2021) demonstrated that households with higher levels of stress negatively impact children during this pandemic leading to children (of all ages) to internalize and/or externalize problems. Further one-third of young children have been identified to have behavior changes during the pandemic (Lee et al., 2021).

Intersectionality and Experiences of Mothering during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The concept of intersectionality has been widely recognized as a valuable approach in understanding the complexities of inequalities pertaining to gender health (Biag, 2021; Guruge & Khanlou, 2004; Hankivsky, 2012). Intersectionality considers concurrent interactions between various aspects of social identity (such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality) as well as the impact of systems of oppression, hierarchies and domination that pave ways for exploitation and controlling people (Hankivsky, 2012). An individual's health is influenced by the intersection of the multiple sources of social identities in relation to the systematic forces of hierarchies and dominations which could have impact on the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (Guruge & Khanlou, 2004). These forces could arise from the micro-level which is the family; the meso-level which involves the informal and formal social networks that constitute the community; and the macro-levels which include the health, educational, economic and social policies of the society (Hankivsky, 2012; Guruge & Khanlou, 2004).

At the micro-level thus in the family, the health and well-being of an individual is often closely linked to that of their family members and shaped by their relationships with them (Guruge & Khanlou, 2004). In the context of our experiences, the overwhelming roles and responsibilities of balancing domestic obligations and academic work could be a source of stress for our health. Therefore, implementing effective approaches to assess and evaluate the COVID-19 pandemic-induced impact on women in academia and their research productivity, as well as their well-being could be a protective factor for their families and themselves (Davis et al., 2021). At the meso-level, establishing strategic approaches for

storytelling to amplify the perspectives and experiences of women or racialized faculty could be sources of valuable perspectives and recommendations for change (Davis et al., 2021). At the macro-level, establishing strategies to facilitate and coordinate collaborative responses with faculty unions across the nations to curb systemic inequities will promote empowerment and enhancement of the wellbeing of women in academia (Davis, 2021).

The intersecting identities shared throughout our experiences include being women with multiple roles and responsibilities both at home and the workplace as we cope with the messiness of our lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the intersections described above, we each had our own perspectives and unique experiences including race, disability, chronic illness, single parenting, and other challenges that enhanced the impacts of the pandemic. Our experiences bring to light the tremendous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had on exacerbating the pressures of balancing our roles and responsibilities within the family. Although our experiences often demonstrate resilience and courage in facing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, they could also be overwhelming. This explication is congruent with Davis et al. (2021) observation that females and racialized faculty experienced higher levels of stress, social isolation, and decreased well-being. The authors explained further that not only do few women in academia receive support for health and wellness, they also experience significant gender inequities such as increased caregiving burden which affect their scholarly productivity.

Conclusion

It is not our intent to represent all of the intersections involved with the inequitable effects on women in academia during the pandemic, we recognize this was a situation where we were not all in the same boat rather in the same storm. The Canadian Women's Foundation (2021) recent survey of mothers found 46% of respondents felt they were reaching their 'breaking point'. We recognize that while our stories and concerns are real, we are likely some of the "lucky ones" with time and privilege to reflect and write about it. We know there will be a litany of other pandemic conditions and

effects to pay attention to, but this recognition of the common issues at stake within the gendered effects of the pandemic give a necessary voice and attention to the less dramatic instances of inequity and stress that are relevant to family wellness.

It is essential to recognize that these struggles impact the family as a whole, creating the potential for increased risk of mental health concerns, family instability, conflict, and stress. Despite academia's minimal flex in expectations for women, we have been parenting in times that are not normal and extremely stressful for both parent and child. This leads to the question of what the longer-term consequences of living in a pandemic as a child will be and the need to acknowledge and support care work of mothers working in academia and elsewhere. As scholars, this has implications for our own scholarly work, teaching, and advocacy. The university, similar to other institutions, has been working to maintain the status quo on the back of the care economy usually supported by women (Power, 2020). The cracks in the foundations have been revealed. How do we move forward from this experience as women, scholars, and parents? How do we patch up the holes and 'carry on' in a way that ethically fits with what we now know about ourselves, our work, our institutions, and our families?

As we look ahead, we recommend that the impacts of the pandemic on children, mothers, and family dynamics be further explored, and the discussion continue. We also challenge employers to consider the needs of mothers in the workplace and create ways to better support working mothers such as reviewing division of workload and considering models and innovations that aim to address and promote healthy and sustainable work-life balances.

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