

Exploring Motherhood and Academia: An Autoethnographic Journey at USC Lancaster Through Poetry

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Purpose Statement

I aim to conduct an autoethnographic study of my personal experience as a mother and college student at USC Lancaster through poetry. My research explores the challenges, successes, and unique perspectives that arise when balancing the roles of a mother and a student and how the context of attending USC Lancaster shapes this experience.

Research Questions

1. What are my experiences as a mother and college student at USC Lancaster through poetry?
2. How does my experience attending USC Lancaster as a mother and student shape my perspective on higher education and motherhood?
3. How does poetry facilitate and enhance my autoethnographic reflection on my experiences as a mother and student at USC Lancaster?

Methodology

According to Adams et al. (2015), autoethnography is a research method that offers a comprehensive and genuine account of an individual's experiences by exploring their perspective on life and culture. Unlike the traditional third-person approach, which can be isolating and hard to relate to, particularly regarding race, gender, and ethnicity, this technique seeks to bridge the gap by emphasizing a first-person perspective.

Literature Review

Many scholars focus on poems as art-based research and autoethnography to explain personal experiences (Bailey and Newman, 2022; Liao and DeVita, 2022; Simpson, 2017; Walker, 2021). They all have a common thread: to explore the role of poems in expressing personal experiences and the challenges that writers face.

*Here I sat, tired, sleepy, happy, and feeling overwhelmed.
The pressure of being a single mother and a college student gets
harder; time gets smaller.*

gets smaller

My life always seems to be spending.

*Taking care of my kids by myself, on top of juggling college,
is very hard, very hard.*

The classes are longer.

*The weight of trying to be a good mother and making
good grades are rough, rough.*

The excitement gets higher.

The feeling of going to the end is like no other.

I am going above and beyond for my children and college classes.

*I believe I can do this; **I can do this**, but sometimes my health
says other.*

*From high blood pressure to anxiety and depression, the chest
pains are nearly unbearable and feel hard,
affecting my grades.*

Here I sat, struggling with college classes.

*Trying to make it to class every day on time only sometimes works
for me. I must go to doctors' appointments for myself and my
children., but I want to give up. The benefit of being a college
student and mother is learning more in life that I can teach my
children. It will also show them that
they can achieve their goals too.*

Findings

The finding reveals my experiences as a mother and college student at USC Lancaster through poetry and how this experience shapes my perspective on higher education and motherhood. Additionally, finding discovered insights into the challenges and benefits of being a mother and college student, the impact of attending USC Lancaster on my personal and academic growth, and the role of poetry in enhancing my self-reflection and understanding of my experiences.

Conclusion

Attending USC Lancaster as a mother and college student significantly impacts my personal and academic growth. My experiences have provided insights into the challenges and benefits of pursuing higher education as a mother, which can inform policies and practices that better support this population. Using poetry as a means of self-reflection has proven to be an effective tool for gaining a deeper understanding of my experiences. Poetry has enabled me to reflect on and express the complexities of being a mother and college student, enhancing my ability to navigate these roles.

Resources

Adams, T. E., Holman Jones, S., & Ellis, C. (2015). *Autoethnography*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2.

Bailey, P., & Newman, J. L. (2022). Making 20% Matter Most: Meeting the Needs of Gifted and High Ability Students through Type III 20Time (T4) Projects. *Gifted Child Today*, 45(1), 24–37.

Liao, C., & DeVita, J. (2022). Arts-Based Research in Precarious Pedagogy-Making Experiences. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 15(1), 233–248.

Simpson, A. B. (2017). *Remaking Poems: Combining Translation and Digital Media to Interest High School Students in Poetry Analysis* [ProQuest LLC]. In ProQuest LLC. Database copyright ProQuest LLC.

Walker, A. (2021). Supporting Lives: Honouring oft-ignored healthcare professionals through poetry and art based on archival research. *Social Alternatives*, 40(3), 51–57.