

Poster Session II  
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*Exploring The Personal Narratives Of Mothers Of Former Preterm Infants Now At Preschool Age*

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**Purpose:** To explore mothers' personal narratives of their experience of being the mother of a former preterm infant now at preschool age, the meaning(s) they attribute to it, & how nurses & other healthcare providers can support them

**Background:** Having a preterm-born child is often fraught with ongoing challenges for the child's mother. Yet little is known regarding how that experience, over time, may influence her health & well-being, her perceptions & practices of parenting, & the meaning(s) she attributes to it.

**Methods:** Using Narrative Inquiry, participant's narratives of being the mother of a preschooler born preterm were elicited & retained as primary units of data. Mothers who participated in previous studies exploring their infant's responses to stress were invited to participate. Narratives were obtained via in-person interview or email. Demographic & obstetric history data were obtained via questionnaire. Transformative Learning Theory guided data interpretation. Data interpretation & analysis were conducted using hermeneutic data analysis & identifying narrative functions, contexts, & metaphoric, participant-specific themes.

**Results:** Six mothers of former preterm infants now at preschool age participated. Narratives revealed areas of difference regarding the neonatal crisis, degrees of stress, NICU memories, vulnerability to healthcare providers, becoming a mother, parenting style, & extent of personal change associated with their experience. Metaphoric narrative themes include "I matter too," "savoring the moments," "honoring new paradigms," "against all odds," "affirming my worth," & "lessons from loss."

**Conclusions and Implications:** The experiences of mothers of former preterm infants now at preschool age are unique & often complex, informed by events & intra- & inter-personal dynamics often pre-dating pregnancy. Discovering the distinctive nuances of each mother & her experience requires time & in-depth engagement, necessary for providing individualized, maternal nursing interventions. Thus, mothers' narratives are sources of evidence to inform & influence nursing practice & policy.