

Dueling Clocks:

How Women Academics Balance Childcare with the Road to Tenure

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Abstract

This study looks at the experience of academic women as they attempt to combine the demanding roles of motherhood and being an academic seeking tenure. My thesis identifies several themes related to this notion of role-balancing for women: the gendered division of childcare and housework, women's experiences in academe, sources of support for women, the influence of neoliberalism in academic institutions, and both tenure and family-friendly policies (Armenti, 2004; Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; Perna, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Young & Wright, 2001). Data from five individuals representing both tenure-track and tenured academics was obtained using a narrative inquiry approach that involved a combination of interviews, document analysis, and a visual representation of labour tasks. A thematic analysis was developed using a combination of grounded theory and a critical feminist perspective. The results from this study may assist in the creation or adaptation of supportive, university-based policy for academics who are parents, particularly mothers.

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Inspiration for this study came from personal reflection and consideration of the many working mothers in my life, particularly my mother and dear friends, who perform the most important work in the world. Lastly, but most importantly, thank you to the hard-working, dedicated, inspiring women who took the (valuable!) time to share their stories with me. They were candid, honest, and open about their personal experiences, and I can only hope to have done justice to their words. Thank you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past few decades, women's participation in academe – as both students and educators – has become more visible. However, the dramatic increase of women learners in universities and colleges is not reflected adequately by an equal increase in women faculty, particularly at the highest ranks. This has been documented consistently throughout research on higher education (Stalker & Prentice, 1998; Barrett & Barrett, 2011; Laster, 2010; Wolfinger et al., 2009), and the most current numbers continue to reflect this trend. Research on the Statistics Canada website shows the rank and sex of full professors in Canadian universities. In the 2004/2005 academic year, there were 11,376 male full professors in Canada and 2,648 female full professors. The numbers from the 2008/2009 year show a minimal increase in women's representation with 3,187 female full professors. However, men continue to dominate this rank at 11,195 (Statistics Canada, 2010). Perna (2005) agrees that women “continue to be underrepresented among the nations tenured and highest ranking faculty. Not only is the share of women full-time faculty who hold tenured positions smaller than the share of men, but also the gender gap in tenure rates does not appear to be closing” (p. 277). Although Perna (2005) writes from an American perspective, this gender gap reflects the previously mentioned Canadian statistics.

A moderate amount of literature has been published which attempts to identify reasons for women's absence from such tenured educational appointments (Armenti, 2004; Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; Perna, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Young & Wright, 2001). While some authors focus their research on issues of sex discrimination and traditionalist patriarchal policies to explain this issue, some recent research focuses on the dilemma of balancing work and family lives for women in academe. The research highlights several barriers facing women

striving for tenure, including demanding publication schedules, ambiguous tenure policies, a lack of professional and personal support, and time constraints for child bearing (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

A central paradox in feminist literature which adds further layers to issues of discrimination and equality is the notion of universality and diversity (Acker, 1987; Wilkinson, 2009; David, 2011; Luna et al., 2010). It is necessary to consider other factors which create diversity within the population of “women”: class, race, sexuality, culture, ability, and socioeconomic status. “All women may be said to be ‘the same’, as distinct from all men with respect to reproductive biology, and yet ‘not the same’, with respect to the variance of gender construction” (Acker, 1987, p. 432). Intersecting social and cultural contexts mean that different experiences require different supports and therefore, one body of literature does not sufficiently represent all women, their needs and stories. To transfer one woman’s words onto the lives of others is to devalue the voice of the individual, and while there are publications representing diverse voices (Thaver & Mahlck, 2008; Carnes et al., 2006; Asher, 2010) , further investigation in this area is necessary.

Through a small scale qualitative research study carried out in Eastern Canada (included in this study were participants who had experience in tenure-track or tenured positions in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia), I explore the challenges faced by academic women as they attempt to balance childcare and the demands of academic rigor as they climb the tenure-track ladder. Following a review of relevant literature and policies from universities and government agencies, I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants. Five women academics were interviewed and were also asked to give a representation of their time spent at home and at work using a visual tool I provided for them.

The Tenure Track

Tenure-track positions refer to the demanding path of university faculty positions leading to tenure and job security. After spending usually between five and ten years in graduate school, one will ideally secure a tenure-track position at a university, although there may be a period of contract work and/or part-time employment in between. Once hired in a tenure-track position, depending on the academic institution, assistant professors are given approximately six years to “publish or perish” (Wolfinger et al., 2009). Job security comes only with tenure. Promotion within the Canadian and American systems involve movement through the ranks from Assistant to Associate Professor, and ultimately for some, to Full Professor. According to statistics for the year 2006 that were published by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), 79.4% of Full Professors were men, leaving women to make up the remaining 20.6% (CAUT, 2010).

Obtaining tenure is essentially a one shot deal, and denial of tenure is almost never overturned. According to Jacobs and Winslow (2004), “Many academic positions in the USA feature a ‘promotion or exit’ structure. In other words, after a probationary period, typically of seven years, the junior faculty member may be invited to join the permanent faculty with the promise of lifetime job security; alternatively, he or she is directed to leave the institution” (p. 149). The pressure placed on tenure-track academics is substantial and follows years of study and research.

This tenure system reflects a typically male life trajectory where one is not primarily responsible for childcare and outside sources will not detract faculty from their work. “Academic

careers have traditionally been conceptualized as pipelines, through which young scholar move seamlessly from graduate school to tenure-track positions. This model often fails to capture the experiences of female PhD recipients, who become tenure-track assistant professors at lower rates than do their male counterparts” (Wolfinger et al., 2009, p. 1591). As PhD graduates are most often in their thirties, women who choose to have families are likely doing so in the midst of their tenure-stream position. Wolfinger et al. (2009) found that women who do not begin their careers on a tenure-track rarely attain those positions later: “women who are not employed in ladder-rank jobs right out of graduate school may be permanently moving towards a less demanding career course, one that does not require the long hours and rigid probationary period of a tenure-stream academic appointment” (p. 1596). One cannot easily postpone the tenure-track process until children are older; academics who allow their PhDs to grow stale are often deemed not employable.

As universities attempt to save money by hiring part-time and contract faculty members, the competition for tenure-track jobs increases. With more people applying for fewer tenure-track positions, the bar is raised for new faculty hoping to attain job security. The pressure placed on women already struggling with time commitments and role balancing is felt more strongly. This often leads to women accepting the part-time or contract positions which lack job security from year-to-year, are poorly paid in comparison with tenured positions, have little support for research, and at times even lack access to office space and basic resources such as computers and telephones.

Alongside the rigidity of patriarchal tenure-track positions, childcare is a significant factor for women in academia. Many struggle with the timing of both research and publication demands required to attain tenure, and child rearing. This leads some women to delay having a

family – an option which can have detrimental repercussions due to coinciding biological and tenure clocks. However, some women, according to research, fear that having children while climbing the academic ladder will be damaging to their career (Armenti, 2004). It is rarely considered, however, that children can provide inspiration for women as mature students and/or professional employees. Clover (2010) looked at the positive effect children had on mature students and found that “ultimately, kin fuelled women’s strength and underlying desire to continue their education. In a sense, family was key to women’s inspiration to remain engaged in school, no matter what hurdles they encountered” (p. 168). There may be a similar effect for some women faculty members who want to set an example of success for their children.

Context

As more women enter the workforce, a complex understanding of the challenges of work-family balance becomes increasingly important (Hartmann, 2004). Working mothers find that issues related to childcare are of significant concern: who provides care, how flexible is the care, and who takes care of the children when they are sick? An academic on a tenure track holds nontraditional working hours and faces demanding publication expectations and schedules. In considering some of the supports that would be beneficial for academic mothers in this study, I considered that it is possible that women who have spouses or family members who are largely responsible for childcare may experience less work-family stress. On the contrary, those academic women who rely on private sources of childcare (individuals employed by the mother or childcare centers) may experience higher levels of work-family stress. On-site childcare (provided by the employer) may also help reduce a mother’s stress and serve as a valuable support for women in academe.

While some of the current literature looks at childcare in relation to time invested by the parents only, Biernat and Wortman (1991) suggest that further study should encompass extraparental sources of childcare. This is important to consider as women continue to increase their participation in the work force; if both mothers and fathers are working outside the home, childcare must fall to another source (Arrighi & Maume, 2000; Noonan, 2002; Pritchard, 2010). Eichler and Albanese (2007) discuss other forms of support related to childcare, and warn against assuming that childcare is only provided by parents. “This overlooks the observation that people without small children of their own – friends, neighbours, grandparents, adult siblings – may engage in childcare as well” (p. 236). To acquire a more holistic perspective from academic mothers, I sought to obtain information regarding various sources of childcare. Hartmann’s (2004) policy article underscores the increasing importance of childcare for working mothers: “married women with a youngest child under six years of age increased their labour force participation from 11.9 percent in 1950 to 62.8 percent in 2000” (p. 227). She claims that “overall, women are increasing their labour force participation, and more educated women work more than other women” (p. 227). There is an obvious need for flexible, affordable childcare for women in academia.

The goal of this study is to assist in identifying factors that need to be addressed regarding challenges faced by academic mothers in obtaining tenure. From this study, it is hoped that information will be provided that may help to inform policy that would benefit all parents, particularly women, who are employed as academics in universities.

In the current literature, interview participants from other studies (Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; Armenti, 2004; Acker, 1997; Toren & Moore, 1998) clearly point to a need for clarity of tenure policies, as well as improved, accessible family-friendly policies. The ambiguity of tenure

policies leads to stress and uncertainty when a woman attempts to combine motherhood with an academic career. As quoted in Armenti (2004), McElrath (1992) speculates that “tenure track committee members may perceive work disruptions as an indication that the woman professor is not taking her work seriously and, hence, believe she may further interrupt her career in the future” (p. 214). Modernizing these traditional, patriarchal policies to allow for more flexibility of time and type of contributed work, could yield a less stressful climb up the metaphorical ladder for academic women.

Speaking from an American perspective, Hartmann (2004) states that, “As a society, we in the United States rely on individual men to compensate women for their lost working time, a mechanism that due to nonmarriage and divorce is imperfect at best. Our social provisions for single mothers are penurious, and we have even fewer subsidies for middle-class women who provide family care full-time” (p. 229). The Canadian context may reflect similar patterns and value systems. Hartmann (2004) further suggests that, “stressing the importance of women’s career development to women’s self-fulfillment (a happy mother is a good mother) and the value of good-quality group child care and preschool to the healthy development of children” (p. 230) are important steps in improving career opportunities for women. These values would be equally as beneficial if implemented in academic institutions for women faculty. Policy change in the areas of childcare and tenure may help make it possible to fulfill multiple roles; to allow individuals to attain a sense of balance between two extremely demanding aspects of life.

Looking at this issue from a feminist perspective, it seems that women academics with children are often disproportionately penalized for having interrupted academic careers. The current structure of moving from a full-time doctorate program to full-time tenure-track employment represents masculine sociocultural ideals and disregards the varying life trajectories

of men and women (Wolfinger et al., 2009). What current policies are in place may not be serving to assist women in career advancement, and rather than question these masculine structures, some women feel they must work within this order. Women who gain access to academic positions “learn more thoroughly how their lives have been construed in androcentric terms, and as a result, must work through contradictory impulses of learning the master narratives while resisting induction into them” (Neilsen, 1998, p. 140). Trying to adapt to these standards is what can lead women to such difficulty in balancing various aspects of their lives.

Research indicates that current structures and policies do not address adequately the concerns of academic mothers. Participants in Armenti’s (2004) study felt that “the tenure clock extension does not resolve the negative impact of having children on research grant possibilities due to fewer publications, which in turn affects promotion possibilities” (p. 73). One academic mother in Armenti’s (2004) study reported that “she had lost her tenure track position by changing her employment status from full-time to part-time work when her youngest child was a baby” (p. 72). Part-time employment and/or time spent out of the academic system should be available options for academics who would like to continue on tenure-track, and be free from stigmatization. Budig and England (2001) write about penalties faced by working American women due to motherhood. Although referring to employment in a general sense, they state that “the most obvious mother-friendly job characteristic is being able to work part-time” (Budig & England, 2001, p. 207). While this is an issue felt across borders of geography and employment sector, this again conflicts with the structure of tenure-track jobs which are rarely have options for part-time or job sharing situations; more evidence of a male-oriented system whereby outside obligations would be second to academic productivity.

Research Question

The impetus to carry out this research came from my experience teaching in the public school system, and my experience as a student in a graduate program. It seemed that once a female teacher obtained a contract position, usually following a couple years of experience, there was considerable freedom regarding maternity leaves and opting to work part-time should they choose to do so. Colleagues of mine who worked as public school teachers and who spent the first year of their child's life at home on maternity leave did not even consider that their jobs may be in jeopardy or that they may be treated as less dedicated educators upon returning to work. When I entered into a full-time Masters program, I thought it strange that there did not seem to be equal consideration given to women academics, despite their extra years of education and research.

After reading Stalker and Prentice's (1998) *The Illusion of Inclusion: Women in Post-Secondary Education*, my interest in academic women's experiences deepened. I found it alarming that despite the image portrayed by many universities: acceptance, diversity, equality and equity, many women were in fact being held up to extremely traditional, patriarchal expectations and guidelines. Never before had I considered that women may be discriminated against for having children and valuing time with their family. On the other hand, there are many successful women academics and supportive departments and institutions; the concern lies in the lack of consistency in policies across institutions and in the individual focus which minimizes critical discourse of issues facing women. Butterwick and Dawson (2005) argue that "if we do not speak publically about, and critically examine, the problematic conditions of life and work within our own academic walls, then our credibility as critics and analysts of what is going on in the world outside them is bound to be similarly diminished" (p. 52). Challenges facing women

who balance childcare and employment demands must be taken up at the policy and societal levels rather than viewing them as independent, personal concerns to be faced alone.

As I furthered my investigation of the available literature, I found a significant amount of work published from the United States, Britain, Australia, and Europe. There appeared to be less publications coming out of Canada, and I found nothing from this Eastern region. What research has been published is predominantly from the viewpoint of white middle-class women, and diverse publications are not as easily found. This study would benefit from further exploration of the experiences of women representing diversity in culture, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. However, as a woman hoping to develop an academic career in this part of the country, Canadian women's experiences are both interesting and relevant to me.

Over time in Canada, women have increased their participation in higher education. Statistics Canada's University and College Academic Staff Survey (UCASS) shows that between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of women university professors grew from about 29% to 33.1% (CAUT Education Review, 2010). Contrary to some other countries, many Canadian women who are employed in professional positions are entitled to a one year maternity leave, enabling them to spend valuable time at home with their children. However, there are still many indicators that women have not attained full equality in the workforce and continue to face disproportionate challenges compared to male colleagues, particularly if they have children. Policies and guidelines around maternity leave in Canada, as well as guidelines from local universities and granting organizations are discussed further in Chapter Four – Findings.

My intent is to explore reasons why women have still not achieved full equality in academe, and why having children seems to place women at a particular disadvantage. By interviewing women to learn more about their experiences, as well as researching relevant

literature and university policy documents, I hope to present a balanced view of the current situation for some working mothers in academe. I believe that by openly discussing the challenges and possible solutions for women in professional jobs, the focus shifts from individual problems to larger, systemic issues that must be challenged by everyone. By looking inwards at our own stories, strengths, and needs, we can contribute to the emancipatory aim of education and initiate change for social justice and equity. This requires that we turn away from the pervasive influence of neoliberalism that currently resides in academe and society at large, and toward a model of democracy and acceptance.

In an earlier study that still resonates today, Bateson (1989) presents the experiences of several women as they move through life in various roles. In her view, only by working together can we attempt to change oppressive societal systems that serve to limit the potential of that society's members:

There is a habit of mind that grows from this way of experiencing one's own limits and potentials that may lead toward societal solutions. The fundamental problem of our society and our species today is to discover a way to flourish that will not be at the expense some other community or of the biosphere, to replace competition with creative inter-dependence (p. 239).

Though this may seem a daunting and difficult task, it begins by creating a forum for discourse where stories can be shared. That is the overall aim of this research study: to give voice to women's experiences.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters representing the stages of my research process. Following this first introductory chapter, Chapter Two is a review of the relevant literature, both historical and current. An initial thematic analysis of this data revealed five prominent trends which are discussed throughout the chapter and supplemented with excerpts from the literature. Chapter Three describes the methodology of this study and outlines the specific steps I took from reviewing the literature to finding participants, conducting interviews, and reflecting on the data. Here I also discuss the reasoning behind methods used and what I hoped to gain from them.

In Chapter Four I present the findings from my interviews with academic women. Using a thematic analysis from a grounded theory approach, I reviewed the transcripts for evidence of the literature review themes while remaining open to emerging themes which were then coded and labeled. I was surprised by both the consistency and variation among experiences, relative to the choices made by each participant. Unfortunately, my sample was not a very diverse one, which in itself points to inequity in academe, but this must be considered when reading the findings. In Chapter Five I give my analysis of the data based upon the thematic findings from a grounded theory approach as well as a critical feminist perspective. Along with the findings I make suggestions for policy change and development based on the participant's feedback.

Many working women are the primary caregivers to their children (should they choose to have them), and it appears that this structure is unlikely to change. While there will always be compromise and modification, supports should be in place that will enable women to participate in their careers while having the flexibility to devote time to raising their children. Ultimately, women should not have to choose between a family and a successful academic career; both are important and both should be valued.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This research study began with an extensive review of available literature relating to the topics being investigated and published in areas such as lifelong learning/adult education, higher education, sociology, arts-based learning, and gender studies. Focusing mainly on lifelong learning/adult education research, I read academic books and relevant articles from various popular academic journals within the fields of adult education/lifelong learning and higher education: *Adult Education Quarterly*, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *Canadian Journal of Studies in Adult Education*, and the *Journal of Higher Education* are some examples. From these readings I identified five themes that I felt relevant to the issue of women's experiences balancing work and family: the gendered division of childcare and housework, women's experiences in academe, sources of support for women, the influence of neoliberalism in academic institutions, and tenure and family-friendly policies.

Awareness and critical evaluation of these themes may help explore women's experiences as working mothers, and consider the supports necessary to assist them in achieving their goals and fulfilling multiple roles. These issues of role-balancing and work-family conflict have been cited frequently throughout the literature, highlighting its impact on working women (Gouthro, 2002; Home, 1998; Tripp, 2002; Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Comes & Stites-Doe, 2006; Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). While changes have occurred in the accessibility and support for women in the workforce, clearly there is still much room for improvement. Broadly stated, this research study looks at women's experiences as they balance childcare responsibilities and tenure-track academic positions.

Gendered division of childcare and housework

The influence of the gender on household tasks and childcare is reported often in feminist and sociological literature (Oechsle & Geissler, 2003; Brown & Booth, 2002; Frisco & Williams, 2003), but is less visible in higher education research. Studies report a continuing imbalance of time spent on these tasks for both men and women, and conflict when roles overlap. “While the workplace is growing in attractiveness for many people, home, or ‘life’ is looking a bit gloomy. For dual-earner couples with children, life outside work is one of fixed timetables (childcare), conflict (whose turn is it to pick up the kids?), low-skill work (cooking, cleaning, nappy disposal) and thankless masters and mistresses (the kids)” (Reeves, 2001, p. 128). As women continue to pursue professional careers, they face the struggle of balancing their various life roles: employee, student, mother, wife, partner, daughter, citizen.

In her ground-breaking publication, *Composing a Life*, Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) shares not only her own story, but the stories of four other successful, interesting women who have faced the challenge of balancing their many roles in life. A common thread throughout these stories is the way the women weave their experiences through those of their loved ones. Bateson talks about one participant telling her story in three parts: before her partner, during her time with her partner, and after her partner’s sudden death. These women naturally adopted caring and nurturing behaviours for others, so much as to provide landmarks for their own challenges, successes, and journeys. Similarly, Acker’s (1997) academic participants followed twisting career paths where others often took precedence over their own needs. “The careers sound less like linear progressions than like complicated puzzles representing marriages, divorces, children, teaching work, higher degrees, sessional university teaching and perhaps a few other odd-shaped segments” (Acker, 1997, p. 72). While these women, like those in

Bateson's book, fostered successful careers outside the home, they maintained many of the traditional caring behaviours of traditional women.

More recent research on women's learning trajectories continues to show that while women increase their presence in the labour force, they often maintain traditional roles of caring for others and multi-tasking work outside the home with household duties (Wolfinger et al., 2009; Correll et al., 2007; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). This traditional idea of mothers as primary caregivers may be true in many cases, but is not regarded positively in many workplaces: "Contemporary cultural beliefs about the mother role include a normative expectation that mothers will and should engage in 'intensive' mothering that prioritizes meeting the needs of dependent children above all other activities" (Correll et al., 2007, p. 1306). According to this study, the notion of being a "good mother" conflicts with employment productivity, whereas men appear to benefit from combining family life with professional careers: "Since the 'good father' and 'ideal worker' are not perceived to be in tension, being a parent is not predicted to lead to lower workplace evaluations for fathers" (Correll et al., 2007, p. 1307). For men, families seem to represent stability; for women, families represent a lack of productivity and time conflicts.

Men and women struggle with the social changes initiated by women's emergence into the labour force (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). Gender roles and expectations can contribute significantly to stress for working mothers, as women are often socialized to fulfill traditional standards of being the primary caregiver for children. "One of the major factors affecting women's concerns is the male perception that work comes second to having children for female employees" (Giddens, 1991, p. 214). A popular subject in feminist literature, gender ideologies play a major role in the perceived gendered division of household labour (Nordenmark &

Nyman, 2003). The Swedish authors claim that “gender ideologies influenced what justifications for unequal sharing were accepted. A belief in equal sharing meant that unequal sharing would be more likely to be deemed unfair while a more traditional gender ideology allowed for the evaluation of a more gendered, and unequal division of time and housework as fair”

(Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003, p. 207). Gender ideologies can determine the division of work in the home; however, some women may find themselves in situations where the gendered division of work is determined by another with different views (perhaps a partner).

Acker (1987) discusses the educational applications of various feminist theoretical frameworks from a British context. The aim of socialist feminism is to remove oppression for women, often with a focus on the position of women within the family and the economy. Looking at the link between children’s education and motherhood, Acker (1987) discusses a gendered division of childcare which can be seen as mothers in Britain (particularly those of middle-class status) are expected to educate their children, to an extent, before they reach school-age. These women are often employed outside of the home as well. “School hours and holidays in Britain place dramatic restrictions on the kinds of paid employment mothers of young children can pursue. So schools make use of, and perpetuate, a sexual division of labour in the home” (p. 427). It then becomes increasingly important to examine the contribution of husbands, partners, and fathers regarding childcare and housework.

Although many fathers have increased their involvement in both household chores and childrearing tasks, women still bear the brunt of both childcare and household labour (Loscocco, 1997; Perna, 2005; Stalker, 2001; van Emmerik, 2002; Frisco & Williams, 2003; Arrighi & Maume, 2000). Biernat and Wortman (1991) found that when childcare was divided into eight various tasks, mothers were more involved in every task than fathers save playing. In this study

involving professionally employed couples and their sharing of household tasks, equal employment status outside of the home did not translate into equal sharing of household responsibilities, and women were consistently more critical of their own spousal and parental performance than men. Even though women claimed to perform more of the household duties than their husbands, the researchers found greater gender equity in household tasks than in childcare (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). Therefore, women were both primary caregivers and responsible for maintaining the home.

Hook (2004) found that on average, women reported spending more time on childcare, housework, informal support, and volunteering than men; while men reported spending more time on paid employment. The total time allocated to the various tasks was strikingly similar, but men mainly focused their energy on paid labour. This study also revealed that time spent on housework was less variable related to employment for women and men, suggesting that women felt an increased responsibility to perform duties outside of their paid employment. These socially constructed ideals from past generations seem to prevail today, when many women are also committed to pursuing careers.

Role satisfaction for women (of both self and spouse) is effected by the balance achieved between childcare and their own employment. Women who take responsibility for childcare are more satisfied with their husband's contributions in the home; but are less satisfied with their own contributions when husbands take on childcare responsibilities (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). While this again points to the influence of traditional gender roles, the question of power is also apparent: Do women want to give up the control of childcare? Do they feel guilty in doing so? Are women being socialized to believe that childcare is primarily their responsibility? Are notions of control and power socially or individually constructed?

Although the previously mentioned studies reflect North American values, the gender division of domestic labour and childcare is also uneven in Germany (Oechsle & Geissler, 2003; Cooke, 2004), Sweden (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003), and the United Kingdom (Bagilhole, 2002; Perrons, 2003). Following interviews with employees in the media sector, an area which offers increasingly longer hours for their staff to work, Perrons (2003) states that “if longer working hours are generalized, then time or the willingness to work long hours will form a new means of gender differentiation, just as other differences, such as qualifications and formal opportunities are becoming more equal” (p. 70). In such cases, flexible work hours means that employees end up working more hours; employees are no longer restricted to traditional office hours, rather they can choose to work at home, and during evenings and weekends. Thus, the pull between homelife and worklife becomes stronger.

Flexible hours can be seen as a way of “allowing government and employers to sidestep any responsibility for facilitating work-life balance by passing the responsibility entirely to the individual (woman) by allowing her to adjust her life around paid work” (Perrons, 2003, p. 73). Again, it falls to women to perform the juggling act between work and home. As one female participant in Perrons’ (2003) study states: “After dropping kids to school, I do 0.5 hours housework and then work through until I pick the children up at 3 p.m. Then I will work in the evening, sometimes at night and usually one of the weekend days” (p. 85). This is a criticism of addressing such gender issues by offering flexible delivery options; women still do the same amount of work, it is simply spread over more hours.

Performing such balancing acts can affect one’s identity as a parent. According to Loscocco (1997), the key to parental identity is the degree of attachment to the role, and the view of what one’s children need. For the self-employed parents who took part in this study, these

were the factors influenced the level of accommodation needed from one's job in order to raise a family. Through negotiations with partners/spouses, parents can potentially realize their ideal view of a work-family balance. However, "the gender consciousness which affects processes of negotiation and domination create a vicious cycle for some women" (Loscocco, 1997, p. 223), as cutting back on employment and income reinforces those traditional roles of the women as primary nurturer and secondary breadwinner. It is an internal battle fuelled by external social and political structures.

Loscocco (1997) also refers to feelings of guilt when she claims that professionally successful wives take on more of the domestic work than their husbands as a way to maintain certain gender norms while breaking others through the building of a career. Some women in this study were worried that they would not be perceived as "good mothers" if they reached a certain level of professional success. Gorman and Fritzsche (2002) also refer to this traditional idea of being a "good mother" in their study about perceptions of women who work and women who stay home. "A good mother is not viewed as one who works to ease the financial strain imposed on her family, nor does she work for self-satisfaction. A good mother just does not work outside the home – period" (p. 2190). Among the participants, "the mothers who discontinued or interrupted their employment were perceived as significantly more committed to their maternal role than was the continuously employed mother" (p. 2195). There appears to be a general disregard for the idea that parental satisfaction can positively affect children's mental and emotional growth (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002).

Both the homelife and academic settings are considered by many to be "greedy institutions" – a term first coined by Rose and Louis Coser as cited in Edwards (1993) – creating challenges for women who decide to raise children while pursuing careers outside the home

(Franzway, 2000; Rasmussen, 2004; Burchielli et al., 2008). “Greedy institutions” are ones that require a major commitment from those involved; one that is generally implicitly stated (Currie et al., 2000). Coser (1974) originally discussed this phenomena in relation to monks, but also wrote about the significant time and energies devoted by mothers to their families, insinuating that the more they give the more the more is asked of them. As quoted in Currie et al. (2000), Coser (1974) stated that “the more wives sacrifice for the family, the more they are bound to it’ (p. 91)”. While academe has also been deemed a “greedy institution” in that it demands a high level of time and commitment, the system is gendered and does not account for individual situation. In a study about university culture, Currie et al. (2000) found that “the major factor accounting for the paucity of women in senior positions is management’s own masculine styles and practices. They discounted factors such as domestic and family responsibilities...” (p. 273). Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) found that many participants viewed motherhood as a major barrier to the progression of their careers. This struggle for balance is experienced by many academics, and felt more significantly by women than men.

“For academic mothers, one of the most time-consuming aspects of their lives and a source of significant personal and marital stress is the fact that many feel as though they work a second shift at home” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 246). This “second shift” phenomenon was originally coined by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in 1989 and “is commonly used by scholars to mean that employed mothers face an unequal load of household labour and thus a ‘double day’ or work” (Milkie et al., 2009). Participants in more recent literature identified this notion as a drawback of attempting to fill multiple roles (Sanjiv et al., 2009; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006; Laster, 2010). “Even though most of the women used daycare in some form or another, they usually felt that they, not their husbands, were expected to get the children ready in

the morning, take them to daycare, pick them up, feed them, play with them, and put them to bed” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 247). These participants are clearly not experiencing gender equity in the home despite membership in a dual-earner relationship.

In the case of married academics, many women do not want their husband’s career taking precedence over their own, but become dissatisfied with their own spousal and parental contributions when they earn higher incomes (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). The notion of guilt emerges in this study: When academic women’s earnings increased, they began to take on more responsibility for childcare – the opposite was found for their husbands. Do women feel guilty for succeeding in the academic world – one that is traditionally dominated by men?

Regarding gender equity among university faculty, Perna (2005) found that women were more likely to hold a non-tenure track position than a tenured position, and that “men appeared to benefit in terms of their tenure status and academic rank from having dependents and in terms of their academic rank from being married” (p. 301). Among her participants, Perna (2005) found that more women were single, separated, divorced, or widowed, than their male coworkers, but there were also differences between women with and without children. “The finding that women with children and women [without children] do not realize similar benefits in terms of tenure or rank suggests that sex differences in the distribution of family responsibilities persist and that women’s career outcomes are negatively impacted relative to men by these differences” (Perna, 2005, p. 302). These findings support the reasoning behind many women who choose not to have children, or who choose to wait until tenured before doing so.

This collection of academic literature shows a clear imbalance in the gendered division of childcare and household tasks; however, few studies focus on the various forms of childcare employed by women and the resulting effects on role-balancing. Relationship partners are only

one source of childcare, and many women rely on extended family, childcare centers, private care, community organizations, after-school programs, and other sources of care for their young children. These options are somewhat underrepresented in discussions within academic literature and need to be explored with regards to how the availability of these supports impact on women's academic careers.

Women in academe

Academic life consists of elements which can both encourage and inhibit mothers from obtaining a tenured position (Toren & Moore, 1998; Sutor et al, 2001; Gouthro, 2002; Heller et al, 1985; van Anders, 2004). While many women feel that flexibility and autonomy represent two positive aspects of their career, with flexibility comes a sense of obligation to work long hours in the evenings and/or weekends (Fletcher et al., 2007; Cotterill & Letherby, 2005; Dever & Morrison, 2009). "There are always articles to read, papers to grade, syllabi to update, and proposals to write. Work never ends in terms of quantity" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 245). This idea of academic work, like housework, never being 'done' was reported in the literature by Acker as early as 1980: "Making an impact on the field involves, for all but the most talented, considerable time and effort" (Acker, 1980, p. 82). Time and timing are critical for academic mothers.

The participants in Young and Wright's (2001) study identified timing as a pervasive theme when asked about the struggle to balance work and family roles: timing of both the tenure process and of their childbearing years. The route to tenure demands years of work and publication – years that often coincide with the latter years of a women's childbearing cycle. Most participants in this study had delayed their careers to raise family first – a choice often

facing women in academe. Armenti (2004) also reported the current trend of women postponing family life until after tenure, which can result in issues of conception and health. Academic women are “hiding maternal desires in order to meet unwritten professional standards geared toward the male life course” (Armenti, 2004, p. 223).

The advice and experiences of other academics can influence the decision of timing for women. According to Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004), “when to have a child was influenced strongly by the spoken and inferred advice of others. For many, the decision of whether and when to have children was shaped by their graduate school experiences and by their advisors’ expectations of them” (p. 247). While many choose to wait until they obtain tenure, one participant illustrated the possible consequences of this decision: “I was turning 30 and I wasn’t going to be one of these women who waits for tenure and then faces infertility...there wasn’t really going to be a better time” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 247). For some, it is simply not a choice they are willing to make: “A family is going to be the most important thing in your life and you can’t let concerns about what others think determine that” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 248).

Timing is not only an issue for women as they consider when to have children, but remains an influence throughout one’s academic career. Raising children involves a commitment often unsupported by academic institutions (Young & Wright, 2001). Perna (2005) looked at differences between male and female academics – around family structure as well as career promotions – and found that women academics had significantly lower marriage rates than their male colleagues: “Substantially higher proportions of women than men are separated, divorced, or widowed (15% vs. 7%), and single, never been married (18% vs. 9%)” (p. 299). These statistics may reflect the notion that both family and the academe are “greedy institutions”. A

successful academic career requires dedication and years of work from both male and female faculty members. This may be problematic when combined with family life which typically demands much more of women than men.

From another perspective, Ward and Wolf-Wendel's (2004) study is informed by expansionist theories which support the idea that having multiple roles can be beneficial for individuals; having children can provide women perspective on their professional demands, and professional accomplishments can give perspective to stress at home. Because role quality can provide positive aspects of these multiple roles, the importance of helping policies in university institutions becomes clear. If women can feel supported in the various areas of their lives, they are more fulfilled as individuals. Unfortunately, according to the literature, this does not appear to be the norm. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) utilize the term "satisficing" to refer to decision making that is "good enough" but not necessarily optimal. Women in this study often report having to be satisfied with being "good enough" in their many roles; a difficult task for many who are top scholars. Data shows that "stress and guilt are likely outcomes for academic mothers given the short supply of time in any given day, the limited time on the tenure clock, and the unending expectations of work and family" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 252). It is vital for women, in any profession, to have supports in place to assist them as they strive for balance in their lives – balance between the demands of the greedy institutions.

While some women strive to meet the often patriarchal standards of an academic institution, others feel that they are evaluated using a different set of expectations entirely. Women academics often report being given a heavier teaching and administrative role compared to their male colleagues who are left to focus on career-building research and publications (Acker, 1997; Terosky et al, 2008; McDonald et al, 2009). "Teaching is a job associated with

women and children, and thus suspiciously feminine and downgraded when it comes to the competition, hierarchy and power that pervade institutions like universities (Acker, 1997, p. 65). Although women may be responsible for more typically “feminine” duties such as teaching and student support, some women still feel pressured by patriarchal pressures such as a willingness to relocate. According to Wolfinger et al. (2009), “Academic careers further conflict with family life by forcing new PhDs to relocate in pursuit of tenure-track positions. Women with husbands and children often lack this flexibility, given that female faculty members are much more likely to have husbands with full-time jobs than vice-versa” (p. 1594). Being mobile expands the job market considerably for academics; another way that women may be disadvantaged.

However, it is not only gender biases which influence women in the workplace. Individual experience is based on various intersecting factors such as gender, class, race, culture, and ability. To isolate one factor is to turn a blind eye to the perspectives of many diverse individuals. “Each individual occupies a location in a multidimensional grid marked by numerous interacting structures of power asymmetry... the task is to understand how these complexly conditioned subjectivities are expressed in action and belief” (Alcoff & Potter, 1993, p. 109). Women’s experiences are not all alike, and there is relevant literature around the influence of multiple social and cultural factors on educational experiences (Gregory, 2006; Briscoe, 2009; Skelton, 2005; David, 2009; Guo, 2010). “These gendered knowledge systems, like gender relations, may differ by society, culture, ethnic group, locality, and so on, and so may produce different knowledge systems within the cohort of all women as well as between women and men” (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 5). Research representing diverse groups of women and their experiences in academe and higher education (Luna et al., 2010; Wilkinson, 2009; Mojab, 2000; Ng, 1993) draws attention to capitalist and patriarchal influences. Mojab (2005) states that

“a critical class, race, and gender analysis is needed to enable adult education as a field and adult educators as its practitioners to respond to the growing inequalities in the world” (p. 74). In addition to the challenges and inequalities created by gender differences, women who are cultural or visual minorities, who are lesbian, who are disabled, face additional discrimination and are therefore underrepresented in the literature. These various experiences, perspectives, and needs are important to consider for informing policy and practice.

Sources of support

In an article which critically evaluates the new economy and how employees of the media sector experience their workplace environments, Perrons (2003) critiques the available supports for employees in the United Kingdom. Many did not “provide any direct assistance with childcare (2% provided a workplace crèche [daycare centre] and 3% financial assistance) yet 26% of workplaces provided counselling/stress management” (Perrons, 2003, p. 69). These statistics show that employers are more likely to assist workers after problems have been created; rather than aiming to prevent such stressors from appearing in the first place. There is little support available for working parents in this employment sector, and even when made available, there is a low take-up rate of family leave-related policies for fear of possible stigmatization by employers (Perrons, 2003).

Another international perspective comes from the research of Oechsle and Geissler (2003), who look at the significance of occupational time constraints for life planning by young women in Germany. It appears that girls entering young adulthood begin considering their choices regarding career development, finding a life partner, and raising a family. In this study, the authors believe choices must be made by women relative to time demands, and that some

young women decide what aspects of their lives will be given precedence over others: they will either abandon stable, fulltime work in order to raise a family, or will struggle with the division of labour at home while pursuing a professional career. Writing from a Canadian perspective, Fenwick (2004) states that young girls “appear to have internalized a personal responsibility both to develop a productive career... and to privately resolve work-family conflicts and gender discrimination that they may experience” (p. 180). This hints at a neoliberal focus on individual choice and responsibility; women struggle in silence as opposed to collectively challenging patriarchal structures in society. A comparison with the attitudes of young men may further show the gendered social and cultural structures that continue to reproduce rigid limitations for women.

Feminist criticisms of these patriarchal structures in higher education and the workforce question the notion that workers and learners are universal and disembodied, ignoring individual differences and available support (Fenwick, 2004). Class and socioeconomic status play a significant role in support for working mothers, as childcare costs vary considerably. Those without family or available spousal support may rely on public or private options that can potentially outweigh the benefits of working outside the home. This becomes a struggle for many women entering careers in academe where full-time positions are rare and part-time positions are not only financially penalized, there is little job security from year-to-year. According to Kichler (1984), if a woman stays home to take care of her children she is foregoing potential salary from an outside career. “Alternatively, if parents hire somebody to look after their children, they will have to pay for a service that formerly seemed to be available for free – although this seeming free availability was nothing but a side effect of ignoring women’s socially useful work performed within the home” (p. 29). This also reflects traditional gender roles whereby the work

done in the home is not considered “work” in a true sense. One’s class, socioeconomic status, level of education may affect salary intake, which in turn affects what forms of childcare are available to parents.

Flexibility is essential for employees who decide to have families, especially in situations where reliable, affordable childcare may not be readily available. “For some people, especially mothers, being able to work flexibly was critical given the continuing low level of publicly provided and high cost of private childcare in the UK, despite recent initiatives” (Perrons, 2003, p. 84). A high percentage of women in the UK’s media sector do not have families, supporting the notion that various employment sectors do not facilitate a work-family balance (Perrons, 2003). This population of childless women mirrors a similar situation among academic women who choose to postpone or completely negate the decision to have a family (Armenti, 2004; Comer & Stites-Doe, 2006; Perna, 2005).

For many academics, the supports are not present in order to achieve a balance in their work-family lives, and they are left to struggle with the demands of competing responsibilities as an individual problem. “However, given the time and resources required to attract and hire quality faculty members, it is in the best interest of academic institutions to understand the challenges these women face, and work to make the academic environment conducive to their success” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 234). Putting supports into place for academic women will not only benefit them, but the institution as a whole.

van Emmerik (2002) looked at gender differences in the effectiveness of coping supports for married academics. Male and female faculty participants reported which types of support were more effective in reducing their anxiety and stress levels – institutional support through the university and/or spousal support. According to van Emmerik (2002), women in particular

benefitted from a supportive departmental climate and practical assistance at the departmental level. The same women faculty members did not value spousal support as much as institutional support. For the majority of participants, “contrary to expectations, such beneficial effects were not found for socio-emotional aid or practical assistance from the spouse” (van Emmerik, 2002, p. 260). This finding may suggest that the presence of spousal support is assumed, that workplace support is seen as an unexpected benefit, or perhaps women would rather seek support in the workplace and continue taking responsibility for work in the home. In the case of professional women, it may be that “parents might not ask for help from their spouse, because they do not want to be dependent on them” (van Emmerik, 2002, p. 260). Perhaps some women want to maintain the traditional expectation that they can “do it all” when it comes to being successful in multiple areas.

Young and Wright (2001) found that many academic mothers felt the need to keep role conflict to themselves for fear of being labeled weak or incompetent. “This real or perceived need for silence limited the ability of some mothers to request, or in some cases receive, support” (Young & Wright, 2001, p. 560). Presenting issues of role conflict as individual and personal minimizes the need for structural change in university institutions. When a woman feels that she is the only one experiencing such difficulty, she will be less likely to fight for the supports that she deserves.

Maternity policies are not enough. According to Young and Wright’s (2001) participants, maternity policies and leaves do not assist women later in their careers: “While maternity and infant care leaves provide some flexibility around the time of childbirth, these policies do not help with the management of the day-to-day needs of and responsibilities for children over time” (Young & Wright, 2001, p. 567). Institutions and departments must provide supports which will

help to foster women (and men) through their academic career progression, not just for the first year following childbirth. “Among the most important policies may be on-campus childcare, employment assistance for spouses and partners, and flexible schedules and leaves” (Perna, 2005, p. 302).

When institutional supports are unavailable or unsuitable for women academics, they turn to other sources of childcare, such as extended family and community organizations. Again, the influence of these alternative childcare sources is lacking in the current literature. Having a reliable, trustworthy source of childcare greatly influences a parent’s ability to focus on their work. “It seemed that the stronger the family support, the less a mother felt the need to worry about the care of her child or children” (Young & Wright, 2001, p. 561). However, while some rely on grandparents or other older relatives for support, many in the current generation face an unprecedented challenge of caring for both children and older family members. This “sandwich generation” experiences greater caring responsibilities with the same available supports – a recipe for stress and career struggle.

Support is not only required to alleviate the needs of a young family, but also to assist academics in achieving tenured appointments. For women who remain underrepresented in such high-ranking positions (Stalker & Prentice, 1998), it is vital to see other women succeed, to share experiences, and to create open discourse around the challenges and supports for women. Participants from the Young and Wright (2001) study depended on the support of a mentor, researching and writing through summer months, networking with colleagues, and working from home when possible as tactics to improve tenure possibilities. From the perspective of a graduate student at the beginning of this academic journey, having a mentor in my thesis supervisor has been essential for personal goal setting and expectations. Open and honest dialogue with

someone who has achieved a great deal professionally while successfully raising a family can show young academics and students that this is indeed possible. Support and discussion groups among students and academics of various ranks could bring attention to these ideas and issues.

It is important to note that supports and barriers vary by institution, department, and based on individual perception. Some participants in Young and Wright's (2001) study reported feeling little to no institutional support, while others claimed the opposite. One group of mothers "stated that the flexibility in teaching schedules, protection of assistant professors' time, and the ability to stop the tenure clock when having or adopting a baby were advantages not easily found in other career choices" (p. 563). Others felt that university requirements were impossible in light of being a parent: "The expectation that assistant professors will teach evening classes, attend meetings held after 5pm, and attend other evening or weekend activities was perceived as wise to comply with in light of tenure. On the other hand, these kinds of commitments were described as difficult for many mothers given their family responsibilities" (Young & Wright, 2001, p. 563). Clearly, there is a need to create equality in policies across departments and institutions in order to benefit all faculty members.

Neoliberalism in academe

The term "neoliberalism" refers to economic, social and political practices which affect society at individual and institutional levels (Saunders, 2010). Neoliberal ideals remove the distance between the market and the state, and impart economic rationality onto the social sphere. Within a neoliberal context, greater emphasis is placed on individual responsibility for making "wise choices" and the ability to compete effectively. "The economic rationality that neoliberalism expands to the social sphere extends to individuals, who should rationally and

consciously calculate the costs and benefits of all their choices, actions, and beliefs” (Saunders, 2010, p. 47). In higher education and academic institutions, neoliberalism can be seen in the competition for grants and promotions, the focus on productivity and output, and the perception of students as knowledge consumers and faculty as overworked producers. Critical and feminist theorists draw attention to the dangers of neoliberalism in education, arguing that the focus should be on emancipatory learning and social justice (Fenwick, 2004; Gouthro, 2009; Plumb et al., 2007; Schmeichel, 2011).

Recent educational research and publications have focused on this influence of marketplace ideals by neoliberal structures (Klees, 2008; Hart, 1992; Henkel, 1997; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Fenwick, 2004). A neoliberal model of education has serious implications for lifelong learners. This corporate perspective “treats education as just another service to be delivered on the market to those who can afford to buy it” (Lynch, 2006, p. 3). The idea of education as a commodity is now relatively commonplace in policy discourse. Responsibility, risk, and support rests on the shoulders of the individual in this context, as lines are blurred regarding what type of learning is deemed valuable for society. These values have been slowly emerging for the past few decades, and neoliberal influence is clear in the literature. As quoted in Edwards (1993): “Notions of education as creating forms of social equality and social cohesion are coming to be replaced by those of individualism and competitiveness in the educational and other marketplaces (David, 1989)” (p. 4). This structure, representative of the global marketplace, was therefore present over twenty years ago.

The influence of neoliberal systems and values has been widely documented in other areas as well; sociology, political science, anthropology (Ritzer & Harvey, 2007; Pang, 2010; Cohen & Centeno, 2006). According to Harvey (2005), neoliberalism entails that “each

individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her on actions or well-being. This principle extends into the realms of welfare, education, health care, and even pensions” (p. 65). Political and social systems place increasing value on commodity and productivity of the individual, and consistently devalue the influence of one’s environment, lived experience and homeplace. According to Murphy (2000), discussion needs to center around the changing political economy to understand the broad social context of this change towards neoliberal values in society. “The relationship between states and markets has produced the changes erroneously characterised as globalisation and post-industrialisation” (p. 174).

Writing from a sociological perspective, Budig and England (2001) discuss the equity problem inherent in society when individuals benefit from the labour of mothers who raise productive citizens, yet when mothers pursue careers outside of the home, they often find that their childrearing work is not valued. According to Budig and England (2001), “the equitable solution would be to collectivize the costs of child rearing broadly – to be paid not just by employers but by all citizens – because the benefits diffuse broadly” (p. 221). Through policies and supports for mothers, they feel that resources could be more fairly distributed to these women who devote their time to foster the next generation.

For lifelong learning, which emphasizes learner empowerment, the rise of technology and emphasis on individuality shift the focus of education from emancipatory knowledge for social justice to a necessary component of skills training (Murphy, 2000). Learning becomes a way to improve one’s output and compete with others in a marketplace environment. Olssen (2002) discusses neoliberal influences on tertiary education policies in New Zealand, and draws attention to the need for critical evaluation of educational structures based on market efficiency values. Neoliberal policies in general aim to “install relations of competition as a way of

increasing productivity, accountability and control. Increased competition represents improved quality within neo-liberalism” (Olssen, 2002, p. 74).

These marketplace ideals which value individual interests, contracted services, state control, management and accountability, replace central regulation with a system of public administration. Individuals make themselves marketable by becoming equipping with the skills necessary to navigate a society constantly in a state of growth and flux. Learning becomes a cost-benefit analysis where knowledge for the sake of knowledge is no longer beneficial. “The learning discourse also characterizes ‘successful’ people (those who are productive, healthy, adjusted) to be diligent implementers of ‘positive’ individual and organizational processes... These are people who develop skills, adjust values, make choices, and take actions in ways that maximize economic productivity” (Plumb et al., 2007, p. 44). Learning is viewed as an investment where the “right” choices lead to economic gains.

The effect of neoliberal values for both learners and faculty are significant. A dependence on student-centred funding as opposed to government grants increases competition for student enrolment among various institutions. To attract potential learners, universities will expand the number of programs and degrees available, even creating competition within the same institution. To produce learners who will become part of a society of efficiency and rapid growth, universities will focus on programs which have a higher market value such as business and information technology. Degree programs and courses which are not as valuable (arts and social sciences) may be dropped or receive minimal funding. It is no longer beneficial enough to obtain a university degree; rather, one must attain education which will make them competitive players in this neoliberal society. “Marketization also leads to a shift in the forms of accountability to an emphasis on market processes and quantifiable output measures” (Olssen,

2002, p. 78). Unfortunately, women faculty are often disproportionately represented in the departments which are considered to have lower market value. In 2006, women Education, Fine Arts, and Humanities professors represented 49.9%, 42.0%, and 41.3% of those faculties respectively. Whereas the numbers for Engineering and Applied Science, as well as Mathematics and Physical Sciences were 12.0% and 15.2% for women faculty (CAUT, 2010).

Neoliberal policies greatly impact faculty members as well as learners, as research is separated from teaching and faculty must provide evidence of their productivity. Many academics recognize the interplay between research and teaching, and how one strengthens and contributes toward the other. This system which rewards research means that women faculty who combine work and family are again at a disadvantage. "If research activity is limited or interrupted for practical reasons, such as career breaks, it may not limit career progression to begin with, but could prove debilitating later in a woman's career" (Barrett & Barrett, 2011, p. 144). Neoliberal ideals ignore social and cultural factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status which significantly influence the perspectives of educators and learners alike. These factors may put faculty in a position where they are expected to compete for grants, publication records, and promotions.

Research projects which relate closely to economics and technology are more heavily funded, which goes against the long-standing academic traditions of research freedom and interdisciplinary approaches. Increasing the competition for funding and rewarding a high degree of output results in certain faculty members devoting extended periods of time to applications, further widening the gap between classroom instruction and student advising, and research. "There can be little doubt that such a stringent accountability regime would substantially threaten the institutional autonomy that universities have traditionally maintained" (Olssen, 2002, p. 70).

To work towards a democratic society in which education has a role in emancipatory social justice, we must take a critical stance on education policies and practices, and on the role of the state within those policies.

It is not only critical theorists who have challenged and critiqued this neoliberal agenda; discourse in feminist theory highlights the damage done to women's careers and experiences under such narrow, patriarchal systems (Gouthro, 2009; David, 2009; Feigenbaum, 2007; Fenwick, 2004; Skelton, 2005). Women in academe are confronted with patriarchal, masculine ideals and values throughout their career progression. The traditional trajectory for academics is represented by a straight line from graduate studies through tenure-track positions to full professor; life, family, and experience along the way are not considered. This value system is further enforced through a neoliberal context: "The values of the marketplace in educational contexts are also associated with masculine behaviour, in that a linear focus on schooling/career and more assertive behaviour are viewed as positive attributes" (Gouthro, 2005, p. 13). By valuing commercial and industrial economies, the knowledge and contribution of women (particularly working-class and minority women) are heavily disadvantaged (Jackson, 2003). For a working woman who wants to raise a family as well as uphold a career, this competitive life trajectory is often not possible and the learning and experience that take place in the home is undervalued or disregarded.

Budig and England (2001) assert that a wage differential can be seen between men and women, and that a significant reason for this is "explained by years of past job experience and seniority, including whether past work was part-time" (p. 219). Because motherhood sometimes leads to periods of part-time work or unemployment, they cannot compete in an employment sector which values productivity and dedication to one's position above all else. Valuable lessons

learned elsewhere (in the homeplace or other informal situations) are ignored as neoliberalism serves to “subordinate and trivialize education that has no market value” (Lynch, 2006, p. 4).

Academics face this struggle as well; “just as the committed employee is one who follows the capitalist agenda for a worker in prioritizing company goals over personal life responsibilities, a committed academic is one who focuses almost all of his or her time on academic work” (Gouthro, 2002, p. 9). Academics are increasingly rewarded for their academic output – articles published, grants obtained, and participation in various committees. Not only does this devalue the work of others who cannot devote the same amount of hours, or who choose to teach, mentor and support students, but an environment of competition develops where colleagues are pitted against one another for rewards and recognition.

Education and learning from this perspective removes the individual from the social and cultural contexts which define their perspective, access, and life experiences. The public and private spheres are separate entities, and the private sphere as a learning site is completely disregarded. “As a consequence, gender differences in adult learning experiences are minimalized or not acknowledged, perpetuating a myth that patriarchy is no longer an educational concern” (Gouthro, 2009, p. 159). If this were indeed the case, if social and cultural structures did not affect learning experiences, women should then be represented equally among the highest-ranking academics.

Often, those who fight against the influence of such marketplace ideologies are penalized by the system: “The allegations against those who resist change are also inevitable; they are accused of blocking progress, of being anti-reform, of being university Luddites who do not realize what the brave new world of the market has to offer” (Lynch, 2006, p. 7). This can lead to divisions among faculty members which can be detrimental to individual and collective success.

A consistent theme throughout the literature on women academics is the notion of support, open discourse, and community building within departments and institutions. The success of many women academics requires that institutions place significant value on other forms of learning, such as that which occurs in the homeplace. While many look to the homeplace for support, this comes at a high price to those women who receive decreased pay, less recognition and independence (Gouthro, 2009).

In order to change patriarchal marketplace values and systems, open and critical dialogue must be encouraged, other perspectives valued, and future generations supported in their professional endeavours. Supports must be implemented to ensure that both women and men can participate and contribute to the academic (and general) workforce, and that their contributions are valued. “Because of family responsibilities, women may take longer to obtain their degrees or to develop a research program; they have difficulty finding adequate time for research and writing or obtaining the necessary qualifications for tenure and promotion. Consequently, their opportunity to succeed within the academic world is limited” (Hornosty, 1998, p. 185). There is yet a long way to go: Fenwick (2004) found that girls were both ambitious and confused about their future careers, but accepted the inevitability of their main role: childcare.

Policy

In order to foster the success of women, in all employment sectors, policies and practices must reflect the lifestyle choices and needs of employees. Loscocco (1997) found that it is not necessarily having multiple roles that contribute to work-family stress, but it is the notion that work and family roles do not easily fit together, combined with a shortage of policies designed to reduce stress on employed parents. In her study involving self-employed women, she found that

women identified flexibility as a key resource for balance (Loscocco, 1997). Policies designed to assist parents as they attempt to fulfill multiple roles of professional and parent are vital as “the job of childcare requires large time investments that result in considerable differences between the total workload of people who have children and those who do not” (Craig, 2006, p. 134).

In the case of academics, Perna (2005) states that “individual campuses and departments should examine the extent to which existing policies, practices, and cultural norms support the ability of women and men faculty to assume and manage family ties” (p. 302). Policies should be frequently re-examined and evaluated for their effectiveness, and there should be room for case-by-case modifications. Looking from a broad, societal perspective, effective family-friendly policies not only benefit parents, but can have a positive influence on society as a whole. “Good parenting, for example, increases the likelihood that a child will grow up to be a caring, well-behaved, and productive adult. This lowers crime rates, increases the level of care for the next generation, and contributes to economic productivity” (Budig & England, 2001, p. 205). A lack of supportive policies for parents can lead to stressful career trajectories and, in the long term, have a negative impact on society.

In the university setting, it is not only family-friendly policies which can be ambiguous and lacking; tenure policies have often been labeled confusing and unclear for those seeking promotion (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Academic mothers are often unsure of what is involved in the tenure process, leading to stress and missteps through career paths. One participant described the process as one of “smoke and mirrors” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 246). Making the tenure process a more realistic possibility for all faculty members, including mothers, would even the academic playing field for women, reduce stress levels, and shift the focus of academe from the current neoliberal trend of individual choices and responsibility.

In an attempt to secure the coveted tenured appointment, academics who have already proven themselves productive scholars and theorists will risk their health and happiness in the race to get ahead of their colleagues. “When combined with the global trends towards competition between universities, financial cutbacks, and increased scrutiny of performance, what has happened is that the process by which tenure is obtained has become a tormenting ritual that seems to have gone out of control” (Acker & Armenti, 2004, p. 19). Academic mothers find themselves working not only a “second shift” of housework and childcare, but also a “third shift” of scholarship after the children are put to bed at night. As one participant in this study reports, “There’s a big portion of our work that we can do between two and three in the morning if we want to and if we can force ourselves to stay awake” (Acker & Armenti, 2004, p. 3). Feelings of stress, exhaustion and sleeplessness were reported by many of the interviewed academic mothers, highlighting the importance of adequate professional supports in maintaining the health and wellbeing of these women (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Similar findings are evident when one looks at the experience of female graduate students in both Canada and Jamaica (Gouthro, 2004).

Part-time options, extensions and clock stop opportunities would ensure that multiple roles can be more successfully filled by women. “Understanding the experiences of women faculty with small children and responding proactively to their needs will provide institutions with necessary returns on the investment that these institutions make in their faculties. It will also encourage more high-quality individuals to consider academic careers” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004, p. 255). On that same topic, Jackson (1990) writes about part-time academics becoming trapped in their positions, and stresses the importance of these positions as stepping stones rather than end points. While presented as a flexible option for faculty to further their career, most part-time academic positions are unreliable contract jobs. These positions typically require a

significant amount of work for low wages, minimal job security, and little to no access for research funds. Regardless of the type of policy in question, the common thread is that policies must be flexible and supportive of those who will use them. “The fundamental requirements are that each institution should have a known policy which can be debated, challenged, and amended in the same manner as any other part of the academic policy and that the institutional leadership should be seen to be committed to the implementation of this policy” (Jackson, 1990, p. 322).

The obvious key players in this area of discussion are those employed in policy sectors of academic institutions. Rarely are their opinions and experiences heard in the literature, but without their input and investment change is not likely to occur. According to Gouthro (2007), creating change in lifelong education requires “engaging with decision makers at the administrative and policy levels of universities, governments, and community organizations” (p. 180). Ideally, safe and open dialogue is the link between research, policy design and implementation, and equitable practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter provides an outline of the methods used in this qualitative research study as it was conducted from literature review through to analysis and recommendations. The chapter begins by discussing the use of a narrative inquiry approach for the methodology. It then provides an overview of the research process, the participants, discusses the ethical implications inherent in the interview process, and how I addressed these issues with participants. I then discuss the interview process and the importance of building rapport, my analysis of policies and the academic literature, and the visual element which I developed for the study.

Narrative Inquiry

In research, the methodology refers to the theory and analysis of how a study is conducted. It requires consideration of the principles and procedures associated with any inquiry approach (Schram, 2003). Distinct from the method, the methodology is the overall idea of how the researcher will inquire into the research topic, whereas the method “commonly denotes a specific procedure, tool, or technique used by the researcher to generate and analyze data” (Schram, 2003, p. 31). For example, the actual interviews I have conducted are representative of one of the methods used to obtain data.

When determining the methodology for this study, I chose to use narrative inquiry because of my interest in learning more about participant experiences and stories. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), narrative inquiry is “a form of inquiry that analyzes narrative, in its many forms, and uses a narrative approach for interpretive purposes” (p. 563). This holistic form of data collection provides researchers and readers with a broad context for the participant’s story; the goal of this particular research study. “The current popularity of narrative research is

an effort to move away from positivism, the traditional epistemological paradigm that views the very nature of knowledge as objective and definite” (Kim, 2008, p. 251). Narrative knowing is concerned with the meaning created by people rather than scientific facts or events. According to Rossiter (1999), a central to the narrative perspective “is the idea that the self is not a fixed entity, an autonomous agent, moving through a developmental sequence, but rather, the self is an unfolding story” (p. 62). People tell stories in order to make meaning of themselves and their experiences within their social and cultural contexts.

Narrative inquiry requires that data is collected which documents the participant’s story in their own words, through interview transcripts, letters, or journal entries. Using participant narratives in research engages readers and may foster a sense of community among participants in similar situations. “The role of the researcher is to be an effective listener and to see the interviewee as a storyteller rather than as a respondent” (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk, 2007, p. 464). There is a responsibility of the researcher to accurately report the story of the interviewee as it is told, and to present it within the relevant social and cultural contexts.

Narrative inquiry as a methodology is often used in feminist research as a way to challenge power issues which can arise in other, more scientific forms of research. Although there are still things to consider, such as whose voice is being heard when presenting the findings, do participants feel comfortable telling their story fully, and how much control do participants have in the dissemination of information, narrative inquiry does provide interviewees with significant control. Participants are viewed as subjects telling a story rather than as objects being observed. Narrative inquiry does not mask the influence of the researcher, but simply requires that one practice reflexivity when interpreting the story. An important consideration in any qualitative research, reflexivity “reminds the qualitative inquirer that

making perspectives and assumptions explicit serves to inform, not undermine, a study's credibility" (Schram, 2003, p. 8). This process of considering one's place within the study is important for validity and honouring participant experiences.

Using narrative inquiry allows me to address the following primary research questions: How do women academics incorporate childcare into their demanding climb up the tenure-track ladder? What supports are available for women combining a family with their academic career? What supports should be put in place to help women combine work and family roles, so that they can fully participate in the academic environment? For a sample of women academics in Eastern Canada, what has been their experience of role-balancing?

Overview of Research Design

To develop an understanding of role-balancing for women (academics in particular) I explored the available academic literature and performed an analysis of policy documents from local universities looking for available supports and flexibility. From a thematic analysis of the literature I identified the five themes discussed in Chapter Two as relevant to my study and began to devise interview questions related to these themes (Appendix A). Following participant recruitment, I scheduled and conducted interviews which also included a visual representation to substantiate women's experiences. Once transcribed, I combined a critical feminist theoretical approach with grounded theory to develop a thematic analysis of the interviews. I looked for themes, commonalities and differences in the transcripts. In the following sections I provide a more detailed explanation of each step in the process.

Participants

I have conducted semi-structured interviews with five academic women who have lived and worked in various provinces in Eastern Canada (Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia). The women in this small sample represent various academic positions and disciplines, including Professional Studies, Arts, and Science, providing some interesting comparative information. I sought participants with at least one child aged ten or under, as children of that age will require some form of childcare.

Participants vary in the number and age of children, represent both married and single mothers, and hold both tenured and tenure-track positions. All five participants are white, heterosexual females. I would ideally have had a more diverse sample, but the women who responded to my request for participation ended up representing a fairly homogenous group. This may also speak to an issue of lack of diversity within academe, and suggest that representation of minority groups relative to ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and ability is low, particularly with regards to women with children and academic careers.

Participant Recruitment

A snowball approach as well as purposive sampling was used to locate willing academic participants. Using the snowball approach, “the researcher asks participants to identify others to become members of the sample” (Creswell, 2008, p. 155). Having contacts at several regional universities, I found this an effective way to begin my search. To locate participants slightly further afield in the region of Eastern Canada, I sent an initial email to the department heads of various university disciplines which briefly explained my study and the participation I was seeking. This is representative of purposive sampling whereby “searchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the cultural phenomenon” (Creswell, 2008, p. 214).

Once contact was made with five potential participants, they were emailed an Informed Consent letter and package containing more detailed information of the study, what would be involved in participating, and forms to sign indicating their willingness to take part should they choose to do so (Appendix B).

Ethics

When working with human participants, there are ethical concerns that must be addressed. A detailed ethics proposal was submitted prior to this research, outlining the intent behind the research. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2008), “proper respect for human freedom generally includes two necessary conditions. First, subjects must agree voluntarily to participate – that is, without physical or psychological coercion. Second, their agreement must be based on full and open information” (p. 192). Participants in this study were given a detailed letter explaining the purpose and structure of the research, contact information should they have questions and/or concerns, and a guarantee of privacy and confidentiality throughout the study. As with any ethical research, participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any given time for any reason. Denzin & Lincoln (2008) stress that “confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure. All personal data ought to be secured or concealed and made public only behind a shield of anonymity. Professional etiquette uniformly concurs that no one deserves harm or embarrassment as a result of insensitive research practices” (p. 193). The identity of participants is withheld, identifying characteristics of family are not revealed, and excerpts from interviews are not attributed to any one individual using an alias. I feel that this helps to ensure that their identities remain confidential.

Due to the sensitive nature of interview discussions, and the lack of representation in academe by women with children, several interview participants raised concerns regarding their anonymity in the resulting publication. Understandably, these women were concerned that their stories may be recognized by colleagues and that this may negatively impact upon them and their careers. The participants were kind enough to share their thoughts, opinions, and suggestions about improving the academic climate for women, particularly working mothers. I am grateful for their disclosure and am conscientious about ensuring their protection. To protect them, all identifying factors such as names of partners, children, colleagues, and institutions have been removed, as well as the participant's exact location. The quotes I have inserted in the Findings chapter are not attributed to any one individual, and I intentionally did not place quotes from the same individual together. Providing participants with a transcribed copy of their interview to review gives individuals more control over what information is shared and in what context. My intent is to bring attention to the issue of role-balancing using the voices of women who face this challenge, and I thank them for their participation.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews consisting of mainly open-ended questions were scheduled and carried out. Using this semi-structured format allowed me to prepare specific questions to ask participants, but also gave me the freedom to elaborate on certain themes that cropped up throughout the discussion (Partington, 2001). I felt that this format provided me with a guideline to follow while allowing for a comfortable, conversation-style interview. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state that throughout the interview process, "meanings are negotiated and co-constructed between the research participants within the cultural frameworks of the discourses within which

they are positioned” (p. 166). The questions I designed for this study were fairly specific but open-ended, and related to the overall experience, supports, barriers, and systemic influences experienced by the individual participants. “In qualitative research, you ask open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2008, p. 225). Interviews were digitally recorded and later fully transcribed and edited for clarity. Each participant was given a transcribed copy of their interview and the chance to make changes, clarify meaning, and give feedback where needed.

Three of the five interviews were conducted in person and two via telephone, primarily due to a lack of funding for travel. With all interviews, establishing rapport is essential to creating a comfortable, non-threatening space for dialogue (Schram, 2003; Partington, 2001; Bowman, 2007; Tanggaard, 2008; Hunt, 2010). A positive rapport refers to a sympathetic or empathetic connection with another (Bowman, 2007). If rapport is effectively established early in the interview process, participants likely feel more willing to share their stories. As cited in Bowman (2007), “establishing rapport has been deemed as one of the most important elements of the person-to-person communication process (Newberry Stubbs, 1990)” (p. 64). While there is not a specific conceptual definition of rapport, it involves such traits as rate of eye contact, frequency of smiles and nods, frequency of one-word answers, and a willingness to take part in follow-up interviews should one be necessary (Bowman, 2007).

Telephone interviews present unique challenges which must be considered both prior to and during the interview itself. According to Creswell (2008), “one drawback of this kind of interviewing is that the researcher does not have direct contact with the participant. This causes limited communication that may affect the researcher’s ability to understand the interviewee’s

perceptions of the phenomenon” (p. 227). I found that not being able to see participants affected certain aspects of the interview. Because I could not physically see the person, I found it more difficult to determine when they were finished answering a question. I wanted to be sure that participants had sufficient time to think and respond, but was conscious that dead air may affect the participant’s comfort level and consequently, our rapport. Also, as with electronic communication, it is sometimes challenging to determine tone with a telephone interview. Whereas in person I would rely on facial cues and body language, I had to rely solely on the pitch and volume of the participant’s voice. Lastly, I believe that a significant amount of a woman’s story can often be read in her body language and movements. Again, with the telephone interviews this source of information was not available to me, but I was fortunate in establishing very good rapport with both participants and feel that the discussion yielded many important ideas.

Another significant consideration in conducting qualitative interviews is the influence of the researcher on the interpretation of the data. According to Beitin (2007), the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to “create thick descriptions of a social world that is analyzed for themes and patterns in context. These descriptions are a product of the social interactions of the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 48). While it is important to maintain some level of neutrality during the interview process, it is essential that the researcher acknowledge their presence in the research and how their perspectives may have changed along the way. Being a woman hoping to pursue a career in academe, I am particularly interested in how women can be supported in their careers; but then, one chooses to study what is most relevant and interesting to them.

Policy Document Review

To further supplement participant responses in this study, research into available policies and practices of local universities was conducted through Internet searches. Maternity leave policies vary by country, so I investigated the Government of Canada website for the appropriate regulations and terms. It is difficult to generalize policies and practices in Canada, as the provincial and federal governments have various responsibilities when it comes to higher education and employment rights. As previously mentioned, the federal government has established a one-year maternity leave policy; however, this varies depending on employment sector and status. For example, some women working in the service industry, or women who are self-employed often do not benefit from these nation-wide regulations. Education is regulated at the provincial level, and it is clear that these maternity and tenure policies vary by academic institution.

Some academics rely on research funding from several organizations, and each one differs with regards to administrative guidelines. Policies from two Canadian organizations are also included in this study: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). This information was used to establish possible avenues of change regarding policies and availability of resources for academic parents. “A valuable source of information in qualitative research can be documents... These sources provide valuable information in helping researchers understand central phenomena in qualitative studies” (Creswell, 2008, p. 230). These documents also provide further evidence of the lack of consistency in policy and practice in various institutions, and more detail is provided in Chapter Four - Findings. Having inconsistent practices leave faculty members unsure of their rights and available supports.

Visual Representation

When used in qualitative research, visual representations may help participants to clarify their thoughts and experiences, and provide depth to their interview responses. According to Creswell (2008), “The advantage of using visual materials is that people easily relate to images because they are so pervasive in our society. Images provide an opportunity for the participants to share directly their perceptions of reality” (p. 232). The use of visual images in qualitative studies is increasingly common, and has been used throughout educational research (Clover, 2010; Rolling, 2010; Sullivan, 2006). In a study using photography to explore the meaning of specific experiences, Loeffler (2005) found that “using participants’ photographs during interviews aided in building rapport. It also provided image-based metaphoric reflexive opportunities for participants, and a secondary data source (i.e., the photographs) for data analysis and triangulation” (p. 345). I found that asking participants to create a visual representation benefitted my research. The participants who were interviewed in person revealed information during the activity that they had not earlier disclosed, and it was an interactive, participatory way to end the interview on a lighter note.

My goal in using a visual element was to obtain a basic representation of how each participant feels their time is spent at home and work. For the on-site interviews, I provided participants with two wicker baskets (one labelled HOMELIFE and the other labelled CAREER), a supply of foam craft balls in three different sizes, and a permanent marker. Participants labelled and distributed the foam balls into each basket, with size representing more or less time (largest was equal to the most time). For example, one may label the largest shape with a “T” for teaching and place it into the CAREER basket, followed by a medium-sized “H”

for housework in the HOMELIFE basket. I purposely did not provide terms for the participants to choose from, as I wanted their own interpretation of time allocation and responsibilities. I anticipated that individuals raising children while employed in an academic setting find it challenging to divide their valuable hours between work and family. When completed, pictures were taken of the baskets so to compare them with the transcribed interviews.

For those participants who were interviewed via telephone, I created a similar representation using Microsoft PowerPoint slides in which the women were asked to click and drag shapes to an image of a basket representing their time spent at work and home (Appendix C). Because participants who were interviewed face-to-face had the opportunity to choose their own terms, I provided terms on the computer version that included an “Other” to represent time spent in a way I had not identified. For the time at work, I identified the tasks of “Teaching”, “Research”, “Administration”, “Committee work”, and “Other” as typical duties. As far as the homelife section, I identified, “Childcare”, “Housework”, “Cooking”, “Self”, and “Other”. A difficulty arises here regarding multi-tasking and overlap of duties. Many women may feel that they perform multiple duties at the same time, such as cooking supper while helping children with homework. This makes sense in light of publications such as Luxton’s (1990) research in which she finds that “while women do domestic labour they often juggle several tasks at once... men tended to take over certain specific tasks which had clearly defined boundaries” (p. 47). Men taking on one task did not reduce the amount of time spent by women on household tasks. More recent research reports similar findings that even though women’s participation in the workforce has greatly increased, many still perform most of the household duties (Schiebinger & Gilmartin, 2010; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). Participants in my study were given the opportunity to clarify any points or raise comments and concerns about this representation of

time in relation to multi-tasking, but it is important to acknowledge that time representation is difficult to conceptualize, particularly when not in person.

Intended Impact

The ultimate goal of this proposed study is to contribute to the body of work around challenges facing academic women. Raising these issues and acknowledging the importance of structural change is necessary to instigate policy change at the post-secondary level. Individuals who experience less stress and fewer barriers along their career paths will be increasingly productive and satisfied in their work. It is the role of the upper-level administration in the university setting to provide such supports and encouragement for faculty, and by including these individuals in this research, their investment in the final product may be vastly more significant. Change in policy affects all faculty members, as well as students, and by providing faculty with clear, available family-friendly practices, the post-secondary experience is improved for all.

Chapter 4: Findings

The five themes introduced earlier: gendered division in the household, women's experiences in academe, spousal support, institutional support, neoliberal values in academic institutions, and issues around policy, are evident throughout each participant's interview. As expected, there are differences with each woman's story, but there are also similarities and common threads linking their experiences as academics. Reading a diverse sample of feminist literature (Mojab, 2005; Ng, 1993; Luna et al., 2010) shows that we cannot group all "women" together under one umbrella of experience, thought, and viewpoint. Likewise, we cannot assume that all women academics will have had the same journey through the academic institution.

Gendered Division of Housework and Childcare

One common thread among most participants was the desire to combine a career with having a family. As a career in academe requires years of study and research, it comes as little surprise that combining the two was a conscious decision. Despite planning to become mothers who also worked outside of the home, many of the women reported facing difficulties and challenges with the logistics of doing so.

Some of the women reported being influenced in that decision by their mother's working experience, either in the home or in the workforce. One participant grew up in a traditional household where gender division was clearly in place. Because her mother worked outside the home and domestic chores were a woman's responsibility, these tasks fell to her as a young girl. "Because my mom worked I had to do the cooking and the cleaning because boys don't do that in those days... I always thought I would plan it differently". This traditional household was changed because she pursued further studies; the family altered their idea of roles for men and

women. One participant who had expressed a desire to stay at home with her children for their early childhood years had a mother who was also home during those early years: “She was home for a lot of the time in my youth, so yes I imagine that is part of why I have that model in my head; to be home with my kids”.

Another participant was influenced to pursue a professional career by her mother’s decision to work inside the home. When asked if that was indeed an influence, she responded: “Absolutely! Because she didn’t enjoy it! She was a very, very talented woman... but in those days it was difficult... women’s roles were changing and my mother got caught in the middle”. While pushing her to pursue a professional career, she admits that she was then unprepared for the work involved in maintaining a home. While all participants obtained satisfaction from their careers and did not regret the decision to combine work with family, some women claimed they would have enjoyed spending more time at home in the first few years of their children’s lives; they returned earlier due to work and financial requirements.

A second common thread among participants was that they had openly discussed their desire to combine work and family with their partners, and had some degree of dialogue around managing household tasks and childcare – who would do what in the home. Again, this is not altogether surprising, but most women claimed that the division of tasks did not necessarily follow that initial plan. One woman who was tenured before her child was born discussed shared tasks with her husband who has a very demanding, time consuming position where he cannot be easily replaced by other employees: “I said to him, You have to help; you have to do half. He said he would, but I knew he was lying at the time, not because he wanted to lie but because he can’t; because of his job”. Although very involved with their son when not at work, her husband’s demanding job and schedule mean that she becomes the primary caregiver by default.

Even for married participants whose partners have fairly equal professional demands, most of the housework and childcare became primarily tasks for the women. “The house is one hundred percent my responsibility and work... I’m not getting anything done because I’m teaching and running the household and trying to find snippets of time for work”. Having these brief periodic moments in which to write is not necessarily an ideal or effective work strategy, but one that many academic women seem to rely upon.

Past relationships also came into play when discussing domestic duties, as one participant currently in her second marriage discussed lessons learned from her first: “Before we had our child we had discussed household chores. The second time around you are a little more experienced”. Also raised in a home where traditional gender roles were the norm, her first husband shared the same gendered ideals of her parents. As previously noted, her second marriage was quite different. One participant who is a single mother with limited support from her ex-husband finds it a challenge to balance the workload of being an academic mother. “I had to drive [my child] to and from school every day because the bus wouldn’t... that really cut into my work time, and I felt like I had to hide that from people at work. I do feel sometimes that I’m seen more as “the mother” at work rather than as “the academic”. I don’t think that helps me long-term in my career”. It is imperative that university administration and department heads consider individual situations and experiences, rather than enforcing standard requirements for all faculty members.

One married participant claimed that her husband took over most of the household tasks while her focus became their child. This was not explicitly discussed, but rather “happened naturally that way”. She believes that women typically end up in the role of primary caregiver: “...I think most of the time the woman does eighty to ninety percent of the childcare. Even now

I'm still the one who says, Do your homework. There's no reason my partner shouldn't be the one to say that, but because it's always been me, then I still do it. It's not on their brain to say that, but it's on yours". Although there are different reasons among the participants: more flexible schedules, natural division of domestic work, breast-feeding babies, traditional gender roles, all women found themselves in the position of primary caregiver for their children.

Women in Academe

For women academics who choose to have children, it seems that timing is a pervasive concern (Laster, 2010; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006; Sayer et al., 2009; Pritchard, 2010). The participants in this study echoed this idea, and because they chose different times throughout their careers to expand their families, and are employed in different academic departments and institutions, no two experiences are alike. Having a child in the beginning stages of an academic career can make a woman vulnerable when seeking a tenure-track position. One individual who had her children early in her career found herself at a financial disadvantage as she "was on fellowship money; soft money", and there were no maternity leave guidelines built into the post-doc. Another woman who started her family early in her career could not afford to take more than a few months off for fear of losing her part-time appointment and income: "I couldn't afford to take maternity leave without pay... I couldn't let go of a course because I wasn't guaranteed that I'd have it again. They would hire somebody else... so I really had to do it". Not only are women expected to return to work; they are being assessed for their level of productivity: "...people are going to be looking at your productivity. There's a lot of pressure".

Pursuing an academic career proved to be a steep uphill climb for one mother who encountered prejudice as early as the interview stages: "The Equity Officer said he was going to

the washroom and would meet us downstairs [to go to lunch]. He left the room, and this old professor... said, Oh good, now we can ask you the real questions... The others listened while he interrogated me [about having a husband and children]". The assumption appeared to be that her family situation would in some way impact upon her productivity level, and one wonders how many male candidates were asked the same questions.

Participants who were tenured before expanding their families appear to experience a lower level of workplace stress: "My career is so stable now that it allows me freedoms that I didn't have [before]". While passionate about her work and research, one woman enjoyed the security that tenure provided when having her child: "Oh yes, I wasn't worried... It's a little easier for me because I am a full professor now and am kind of at the top of my game".

Increased job security is certainly a benefit to having tenure before children, but this decision can raise a host of other considerations around age, fertility, health, and other concerns about having children at a more mature age. "We didn't have an idea of time around my career. My child was born when I was [in my late thirties], so the biological clock was ticking. I wanted children and there wasn't a lot of time". Although increasing numbers of women appear to be waiting longer to expand their families, as one participant pointed out: "...women's fertility can decline, but they are also aging better now".

The flexibility afforded in an academic career seems to work both for and against women with children. Because many academics can choose their hours to a certain extent, this may be beneficial for meeting the needs of a family: "I do think that a career as an academic gives you that flexibility... I think we all work at home; we're working all the time". However, this flexibility also means that some women feel an obligation to work irregular hours. One woman talked about weekend meetings: "It just doesn't even get discussed. If there's advising on

a Saturday then you should be there just like everyone else”, while a single mother discussed working only after her child was in bed: “...bedtime is at eight o’clock... On average throughout the year I work from eight to ten or ten-thirty on four or five nights a week”. Working late into the night seemed to be fairly common among the interview participants too, although one acknowledged that it cannot last forever: “I can’t do anything between ten o’clock at night and two in the morning anymore; I’m exhausted”. With a full day of professional work, housework, and childcare, this eventual burnout seems almost inevitable.

The flexibility and ability to work from home means that many women also continue to work during their maternity leave. Prior to tenure, this may be a necessity: “I was a post-doc so you don’t actually get any maternity leave... I worked right up until the week before I was due, and was back in six months... It was extremely stressful”. After tenure, a combination of job requirements and passion keep women working no matter how young their children: “Running your own lab is like a small business; you cannot fold up and go home... And you don’t want to, to be honest because you’d go stir crazy after a while”. Despite being tenured, this woman returned to work prior to the end of her maternity leave, bringing her child in a snugly, and held regular lab meetings on campus. Another tenured professor spoke about her commitment to academe: “I don’t know of any academic women who go on maternity leave and don’t work. I worked all through; wrote when she napped... The reason we do this is because we’re passionate about it”. The passion and drive of these women came through strongly in their interviews; the determination and resiliency is admirable to say the very least.

Women continue to pursue academic careers, despite the barriers they may encounter, just as they continue to increase their visibility in the workforce in general. Generations of young women are being raised to believe that they can “have it all” which creates pressure to “do it all”;

raise a family while developing a successful career outside the home. One participant spoke about the demands of both family and academe: “I don’t regret having my children and I really love them and invest a lot of energy in them. But they are demanding; you don’t have your own time... the academic life is not designed for family or parents”. For some academic women the idea of “doing it all” results in stress and feelings of guilt, as voiced by one participant who was not tenured at the time of her child’s birth: “We have to drop our child off at seven-thirty or quarter-to-eight in the morning and pick her up at five. That’s a long day for a small child you know... You do feel guilty because it’s such a long day”. But when planning for children with her husband, she also felt that “career-wise, it’s never going to be a perfect time. So I thought I would do it when I was a good age to have a child; you’re not too old”.

All participants felt the struggle of balancing child rearing at various stages of their careers, but one single mother dealt with role-balancing before the interviews even began and continues to do so: “I think I am seen as a contributing member to the faculty... But a lot of my fellow colleagues work around ninety hours per week; I can’t do that. I do work a lot of hours, but a lot of my hours are spent with my kid as well. There is some anxiety for me around that”. To adequately support faculty members, department heads and administrators must consider individual needs and strengths. As accomplished academics, the passion of these women is clear. As mothers, their struggles are significant: “The difficult thing for me is that these are important years for my kids – their brains are getting hard-wired – and that coincides with me being on tenure-track. That’s hard because they’re both vitally important and I can’t disregard either”.

Spousal Support

The married women in this study reported receiving some form of support from their husbands, albeit to a varying degree. One woman had been previously married to a man with traditional values and she found herself responsible for childcare entirely. When it came to driving the children to daycare: “He had old fashioned views where the woman took care of the children... They would not be in the car with him because that was a woman’s thing”. In her second marriage she was careful not to recreate that situation and her current partner is actively involved in childcare: “He’s very very good with my kids”. Similarly, one participant found that all domestic tasks fell to her, and she found the realities of being a working mother to be far from her ideal image: “I am responsible for all of [the childcare]. I just met a woman at a conference who said, ‘It’s not at all like we thought, is it?’ I meet women all the time like that. We have this idealized view of motherhood... it just doesn’t happen”. Receiving very little support from her partner, this woman tries to contribute positively to both her professional and domestic spheres while dealing with the stress of not being able to do so as well as she would like.

Interestingly, although there was active discussion around having children as well as career plans, the bulk of the childcare still fell to the women. The degree of support from partners seems to be dependent on their own work demands, despite the fact that the women manage demanding and time-sensitive academic roles: “He does his best to leave work, but the truth is that he simply can’t sometimes; he may be on call in which case I have to be there”. Support from partners can come in other forms as well. One participant and her husband decided to hire a nanny to help with childcare and light housework. In this sense, financial stability may be seen as the upside to demanding, busy careers where time is not as readily available.

For a participant who is currently a single mother, her ex-husband taking the children for short periods of time enables her to work: “When my ex takes the kids, I work that entire

weekend. I see that as an opportunity to move ahead with my research”. The nature of an academic career means that time is a valuable commodity not to be wasted, whereas the overall impression of academia may be that flexibility means freedom to care for children. A lack of spousal support is more noticeable when children have specific learning needs. One participant mentions the difficulty of being primarily responsible for childcare when the child has significant learning challenges to overcome: “That’s why I have such a narrow window in my day; there’s music class, tutor, psychologist, supper, homework... Because of learning needs I have to do all the homework. If [my husband] does it, it ends up in massive fights”. Finding that balance of caring for others and nurturing oneself and career is a complex and unclear task.

Across the board for these participants, they perform most of the childcare duties regardless of marital status or position within the academy. Is this a societal practice whereby women are socialized to believe that this is their responsibility as mothers? Even in the most “equal” of households, do patriarchal values persist when it comes to childcare? Are women biologically “hard-wired” to think about their children more often than men? This study looks at the experiences of a small, fairly homogenous group of women, and further research should include women of other ethnic groups, cultures, religions, socioeconomic backgrounds, and sexual orientation.

Institutional Support

Pursuing a career in academia requires years of study and research which generally parallel a woman’s childbearing years. The further one moves along the continuum of doctoral student to post-doctoral fellow to tenure-track faculty member, the heavier the pressure and requirement to produce. A common stress for women who wish to raise a family is, again,

timing: “And it’s hard to know – when is the perfect time? When you’re writing a thesis? Or after that when you’re... going to interviews pregnant? That doesn’t work either. And then when you start a job... you’re going for tenure, so how is that going to look?”. The issue of timing is documented throughout the literature, and was prominent in my discussions with participants in this study. One wonders then, why are there not more supports at the institutional level to help women participate in the competitive climate of academia?

Perhaps the single most significant change that could be made, according to the participant’s responses, is the availability and/or improvement of on-site daycare. One woman pointed out that as an academic, “...you rarely end up where you started. So many women end up with no family support”. Not having family members who live locally and can provide back-up childcare means that women are at the mercy of whatever support they can find. For all working mothers, finding adequate care for children can be a significant concern, and academics are no different despite the fact that many universities have daycare facilities. However, the daycare on campus is not always readily available: “They should favour faculty first because the faculty is the productive part of the university... I should know that if I’m having a baby there’s a spot for my child. That would be a huge, huge relief”.

Some of the women found university daycare to be selective regarding the age of the child – offering care that covers a two year window. In addition, women employed in universities located in the Maritime Provinces had spent up to two years on waiting lists for various daycare centers, making it unrealistic to choose a daycare which would cover their needs for such a short time. An academic relocating for a position would not have the benefit of already being on waitlists at the new locale. One participant who is currently living in a different province but had previously worked in Quebec, was shocked at the difference in available,

affordable childcare: “It’s a huge problem in this province. Coming from Quebec where this is a non-issue... daycares are available, they’re monitored, they’re evaluated, and they’re cheap – seven dollars a day no matter what your income is”. With childcare so hard to obtain and so costly in some Canadian provinces, academic institutions have a responsibility to their faculty to provide these supports. After all, faculty who have less stress and worries at home will likely be more engaged and productive at work. Having children so close to the women’s place of work would be comforting for the parents: “The location is so great... Especially when she was younger, that would have been much better”.

It is not only the availability of childcare that is important, but it is also the cost. As working employees of academic institutions, affordable, drop-in daycare is a necessity. Without it, women spend valuable time and money arranging care: A single mother states, “I spend between a thousand and fourteen hundred a month on daycare and babysitting costs... Daycare has been a major focus and a major stressor for me in terms of figuring it out; it’s been a challenge”. Academics, like teachers in the public school system, have schedules which change throughout the year. Many daycare centers require payment for the full year in order to secure a spot. This is another gap that could be filled by campus-based childcare if they offered care on a term-by-term schedule: “These things cost a lot of money when [your children] are in full-time care... you have to pay for the whole year... so suddenly your vacation costs you double. It’s crazy”.

Women who choose to have children at early stages in their career not only face high childcare payments, but also struggle with a lack of institutional support in terms of maternity leave. Having a child during graduate school proved challenging for one participant who had to negotiate a minimal leave: “It’s up to negotiation between you and your supervisor... There are

no guidelines around that in [some of the externally funded] grants”. Women often have to go back to work early for career and financial reasons: “I had to. Maternity leave was short and I couldn’t afford to take leave without pay”. Maternity policies often vary according to each institution’s collective agreement, and some higher-ranking women still return to work early for financial reasons: “You couldn’t take a year off unless you were financially wealthy... you get twenty weeks at ninety-five percent of your salary. After twenty weeks, you need to pay your pension money which amounts to about one thousand dollars a month”. Having obtained tenure first definitely alleviates some of the pressure, as one participant experienced, but she was also insistent that on-site daycare is critical: “You need to have good daycare on site that is drop-in. You need to have a place that you can take your sick child a well if women are going to be productive, because the truth is that all women appear to be the primary childcare provider... it just seems to be that way”. If we accept the fact that most women are going to fill this role, it is necessary that they be given adequate support to do so.

Support within the department is important for success and camaraderie; this is evident in the interview transcripts. One woman knows several other mothers in her department which creates an atmosphere where she feels comfortable combining the needs of her family with those of her career. Taking matters into their own hands, some women have even organized informal babysitting groups which involve meeting on campus with their children and taking turns to watch them while the other women catch up on work: “That can only happen if you have a number of women [in your department], and then people understand when you have to leave because of a sick child. Having more women in the department is important... helpful and provides role models for other women coming through”.

On the other side of the same coin, a tenured participant finds that even that level of job security does not alleviate the stress of being a mother in her department: “Even now if we have a department meeting that runs late, I have to leave and pick up my [children], and I’m the only one saying that. With the other people in my department, if they have a small child the other parent doesn’t work. So I’m the one seen skipping out... it’s awkward”. A critical mass of women in departments not only creates a more diverse faculty, but provides support and mentoring for other women facing the patriarchal demands of academia. “I think that unless you can see people taking those opportunities and not facing repercussions, you’re not going to stop worrying about what might happen”. Because women at times do face repercussions when they combine work and family roles, a competitive atmosphere may begin to emerge: “People walk up to me and say, ‘I could have done that’... And this is women doing this to other women”. This participant held a position where she was provided institutional supports for her research and felt unsupported by her colleagues in both her research and her challenges as an academic mother. “Some women are very much like, I have succeeded, I have managed to balance these things, so I am better than you. You’re supposed to suck it up; there’s no empathy”.

Neoliberalism in Academe

As neoliberal values of individual choice and responsibility continue to infiltrate post-secondary institutions, challenges facing women academics become singular problems to be handled silently as opposed to structural issues that require collective action and change. In light of this neoliberal influence, participants were asked about advice given to them by other academic women regarding role-balancing; whether they received any and how useful it was. Most participants did not receive any sort of mentoring or advice from other women, although

informal discussion and commiserating was quite common: “We certainly griped a lot together”, said one participant, while another marvelled at her supervisor’s experience: “...she was a single mother. She did it because she worked incredibly hard, and we talked about that... But we didn’t come to any great conclusions”. Some women found a level of informal support and comfort from discussing their concerns together, but the traditional, patriarchal systems which create these issues in the first place need to be challenged.

The neoliberal focus on productivity and output represent marketplace values with faculty as the producers (of knowledge) and students as the consumers (of knowledge). Said one participant: “We’re letting a scientific business model run the world and that’s the problem. It’s completely inhumane and everything is reduced down to dollars, dollars, dollars”. Competition for research grants, pay raises, recognition, and teaching relief for research create an atmosphere where some worry about taking time off – even to care for children. Without the aforementioned mentorship or role models, many women are unsure about asking for assistance such as an extended tenure-track: “I know that’s not built-in. And to be quite frank, I don’t think I would want to ask for that because... I think most professors evaluating my file would hold that against me. I think they would see it as a weakness... I don’t think I would want to draw attention to myself in that way”. The tenure-track becomes a sort of assembly line; if you jump off for any reason, you will likely never get back on. Another participant stated: “When you’re in that tenure-track rat race... it’s all about time, and you have to produce”.

This system based on productivity deems motherwork to be unproductive: “Just like the reproductive labour of women, the reproductive labour of the institution (creating the next generation of scholars) is not valued”. Generally speaking, the academy does not value time taken to raise children and produce well-rounded citizens. One woman claimed that it would be

best to have a child “while you’re [enrolled] in something, like the post-doc or the PhD, so that you have some sort of security”. Otherwise, taking a break and trying to get back in “is extremely difficult”. For one woman without the support of a partner, taking time out with children is an absolute necessity, and yet is still deemed unproductive in the eyes of a hiring committee: “There was some discussion around those few years when I was home with kids. There were questions around my CV and the gaps of productivity there”. Because few jobs open up each year in Canada, the competition becomes even greater and those with minimal career interruptions are chosen first: “There are so many people going after positions... if there are people who are fresher and just out of a PhD as opposed to people who have been out for a year or two... it’s difficult”.

It is a cyclical effect: with the proper supports in place, women can become a more representative population in academe. More women in high-ranking appointments provide role models for young women and strengthen the voice of equity. If more women with children are seen as successful in the workplace, the job becomes more desirable. “Women students need opportunities to watch women professors solve (and fail to solve) problems and male professors fail to solve (and succeed in solving) problems. They need models of thinking as a human, imperfect, and attainable activity” (Belenky et al., 1986, p.217). The patriarchal and neoliberal ideals of competition, individuality, productivity, and rigid timelines much be challenged for their discriminatory nature against women and other diverse groups.

Policy

As a summary of the previous sections, it is clear that policy change in several areas is necessary in promoting the careers of women with children. When asked what would improve

the situation for women academics, every participant almost immediately talked about daycare. On-site, affordable, available daycare that covers more than a two-year window is necessary for academic families. One woman felt strongly that available daycare for all women in the Maritime Provinces could be greatly improved: “Daycare should be subsidised and arranged much better in this province for everyone, but at the university level I think that that is something they could do”. Provincial policy is beyond the scope of this research study, but certainly it is an issue which must be addressed.

When available, some participants with experience working in Eastern Canada felt that their maternity leave was quite substantial: “My maternity leave here was quite generous... it’s six months at ninety percent”. However, the problem arises when women have children before they are tenured and therefore do not have the ability to comfortably take time off. There is a great deal of uncertainty around available policies for mothers: “There is nothing in the collective agreement that says, When you do this, time will stop. When you come back, the clock will start ticking again. There’s no set rules so that you can be assured there is a process in place and you will not be negatively impacted”. Many research grants have a built-in clause about stopping for a year, but university policies appear to be less consistent.

As many women find themselves in doctoral programs or post-doctoral fellowships in their thirties, having support built-in to the guidelines for these programs would be a significant improvement for women, particularly those in the sciences where post-doctoral fellowships are mandatory and women are already underrepresented. Encouraging women to participate in diverse disciplines involves creating a supportive environment for them to flourish along with their male colleagues. A participant in this study spoke about conferences within her discipline that often include seminars on role-balancing. She found them to be helpful in the sense that

“you could see you weren’t alone”. Acknowledgement and discourse around role-balancing brings this issue to the fore where it cannot be ignored. This is the first step which may help lead to a change in the academic system as it currently stands, with its’ focus on output. One woman believes that it is detrimental to “change the standards, because these standards didn’t just come out of nowhere; they have evolved”. If the academy can make room for those who contribute in different ways: teaching, service, student support, community engagement; the more diverse and open-minded out institutions will be.

A final suggestion voiced by several participants pertains to spousal hiring policies. As many academics must seek work in other cities, perhaps even other countries, it would help to have policies in place which would ease the transition of a move and make finding employment less stressful. Above all, it is necessary to value the work of academic mothers, and to create positions and post-docs designed for women who have been out of the academic game for some time. This involves an awareness of those involved in the hiring process: “Having an equity officer doesn’t ensure equity in and of itself. There needs to be more education of professors on hiring committees about equity and what it means. I think when we talk about equity, people often think of it in terms of gender, but not necessarily in terms of mothers”.

Mothers are performing some of the most important work of all. If they desire a career outside the home, in any field, it should be a duty of society to create spaces and supports for these women which begin with change at the policy level. After all, society as a whole benefits from the work of mothers who raise productive, conscientious citizens. “If a democratic government is to be wise rather than foolish, knowledge relating to existing policies and practices as well as to possible future alternatives must be widely distributed, not kept in the hands of the initiated few” (Martin, 2000, p.38). We must challenge societal structures that keep

the power in the hands of the dominant few; that keep women from recognizing their full potential as working mothers.

Government regulations, individual institutions, and granting organizations in Canada have varying policies regarding maternity leave. According to the Federal Government, many working women in Canada are eligible for a one year maternity leave period where they are entitled to receive a percentage of their average income. The basic rate for maternity leave is fifty-five percent of the average earnings, up to a maximum of \$44,200 (Service Canada website). It is possible to receive increased benefits if the family qualifies as low-income. “Maternity benefits are payable to the birth mother or surrogate mother for a maximum of 15 weeks. To receive maternity benefits you are required to have worked for 600 hours in the last 52 weeks or since your last claim” (Service Canada website). Although there is fluctuation in these numbers depending on one’s employment, the ability to take a year is a benefit that women in some other countries do not have. However, as previously discussed, even some academic women who are highly educated are not able to take a year due to job requirements or financial need.

Two of the major granting organizations in Canada also have maternity and parental information available on their websites. According to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), an individual can interrupt their SSHRC award for either an unpaid maternity leave or paid parental leave. “You are eligible for an unpaid leave of absence of up to three years, in accordance with your institution's policies, for reasons of maternity, child-rearing, illness, or health-related family responsibilities only, provided your institution permits such leaves” (SSHRC website). The maternity leave and parental leave

distinction is important in that fathers, extended family, and adoptive parents can also take advantage of this interruption in funding.

The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) gives researchers the option to apply for part-time grants due to family responsibilities. “For purposes of holding an award part-time, *family responsibility* is defined as ‘the primary responsibility for providing the personal care to a dependent family member (e.g., pre-school children, infirm spouse or parent) which affects the ability of the fellow to perform the activities necessary to participate fully in his or her research’” (NSERC website). NSERC also has clear guidelines for postdoctoral fellows in need of maternity or parental leave: “The agency will provide parental leave supplements paid out of grants within six months following the child's birth or adoption to eligible students and postdoctoral fellows who are paid out of agency grants and who are primary caregivers for a child” (NSERC website). Having clear guidelines for both students and professionals is important to reduce stress and uncertainty.

It is clear from the participant responses and document analyses in this study that policies vary from institution to institution. No two women responded the same way when asked questions about maternity leave, stopping the tenure clock, and getting back into the publishing loop after having children. I had investigated the collective agreements for two universities in Eastern Canada to see what they claim to offer faculty members in terms of maternity leave, and how different the regulations and supports are. According to the maternity guidelines of one institution: “For the first two (2) weeks the Employee shall receive 95% of her nominal salary; For up to a maximum of fifteen (15) additional weeks, the Employee shall receive an amount equal to the difference between the Employment Insurance (EI) benefits received and 95% of the Employee’s nominal salary” (Collective Agreement website). Women at this institution are

entitled to seventeen weeks of maternity leave with almost their full pay. There are also parental guidelines which state that an individual can choose to take unpaid leave for up to thirty-five weeks.

There are slight differences in the collective agreement of another university in Eastern Canada, where women are still entitled to a maximum of seventeen weeks of pregnancy leave at ninety-five percent of their salary, but the regulations around parental leave are more specifically outlined. Parents are eligible to take thirty-five weeks of parental leave, but partners of mothers can only take parental leave if the birth child is less than twelve months old, or if the adopted child is less than five years old (Collective Agreement handbook). This policy does not state whether this leave is paid or unpaid, but one would assume unpaid in accordance with other university policies. The agreement for this particular university states, “Where a member returns from pregnancy leave during the fall or winter term, her individual teaching assignments shall be agreed upon by the member and her Department Chair/Director with the approval of the Dean” (Collective Agreement handbook). This policy seems quite vague, and one would question whether the faculty member has any control over which courses they return to. As noted in my participant interviews, one woman who had a child before securing a tenure-track position was faced with the choice of returning to work three months after giving birth, or losing her part-time teaching appointments. There is little clarification in either collective agreement regarding differences in support for tenured and contract faculty.

Visual Representation

The intent of this element of the interview process was to create a visual model of the participants’ time distribution, both at home and work. I felt there was a possibility that, through

this exercise, information may arise that had not yet been discussed, and that participants may find it beneficial to see a physical representation of how they divide their hours. The activity was a hands-on exercise for the interviews that took place in person, and was presented as a PowerPoint activity for those interviewed by telephone. As previously discussed, women typically multi-task more often than men, and this presented a challenge in this element of my study: How accurate would these time distributions be if women were often performing more than one task at a time? However, my intention was to obtain an estimate of time distribution, and I feel that I was able to do so.

This exercise was beneficial to the study in that new information did arise through the activity and our discussions afterwards. Some participants dedicated a great deal of time to particular areas of their lives that they had not mentioned up until that point. For those interviews that took place in person, I found a change in tone when the women were participating in the activity. In general, the women seemed more relaxed and comfortable, which may be why the new information surfaced.

For the face-to-face interviews, the women were asked to name the tasks, at work and home, that make up the majority of their time (ex. Teaching, research, childcare, housework, etc.). Because I had not produced a list of tasks for them, I believe that these responses were perhaps slightly more representative of the individual. For the telephone interviews, I presented several options of tasks to choose from (including an "Other" category). While I received valuable feedback from each participant, I acknowledge that the results may have been slightly different had they been able to choose the categories themselves.

Participants spend the majority of their time at work on teaching and research tasks. Perhaps not surprisingly, the participants representing the Science disciplines reported spending

the most time on research. Most participants also reported spending a moderate amount of time performing committee work in their departments, and those employed in Professional and Arts disciplines devoted the most time in this area. One participant commented that she wished she had more time to devote to research, but instead had a very heavy teaching load. Because there are so few individuals teaching in her discipline at her institution, teaching takes precedence.

The majority of time spent at home for the participants in this study was dedicated to childcare. Each woman had identified themselves as the primary caregiver throughout the interview, so this did not come as a surprise. There was somewhat of a divide when it came to housework, in that some participants spent a great deal of time maintaining their homes, and others spent significantly less. Upon reflection of the interviews, I see that there are various reasons for this dissimilarity. One participant had noted that while she was responsible for childcare, her husband took on primary responsibility for the housework; that was the balance that they had come to accept. Another woman had indicated that while she did take care of the home, she did not dedicate a great deal of time to it, and yet another participant had slightly older children who could help out around the house. One of the single participants spent considerable time cooking and taking care of the home, but noted that she did so while spending time with the children (multi-tasking). Personal standards and circumstances led to varying responses in this area, but all women reported that it was a part of their daily life.

Through the process of this visual activity, women shared information about their personal lives that had not been previously mentioned. It was interesting to see what other tasks and activities they incorporated into their homelives. For example, one participant talked about her passion for cooking, which represented a significant time investment for her. Women mentioned hobbies such as exercising, gardening, yoga, and socializing with friends. All of these

important parts of an individual's life had not been part of our previous discussion, and this is a benefit of creating a visual representation. I not only came away with more information about the lives of the women I spoke with, but I could see them as more than working mothers and academics. In qualitative, feminist research, it is important that participants are not seen as objects to observe; rather, they are individuals with lives, stories, and experiences of their own.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Recommendations

Following Bensimon & Marshall (1997) as cited in Armenti (2004), I have interpreted the interview and research data using a critical feminist perspective “that includes (a) gender as the fundamental category of attention, (b) data on lived experiences and perceptions of women academics, (c) results that answer important questions about women’s lives, and (d) research that is change oriented” (Armenti, 2004, p. 215). This perspective is appropriate for this study as I am interested in women’s gendered experiences as academic parents, and hope to contribute to a body of work that will lead to change in policy and practice. Critical and feminist research work to inform one another according to Denzin and Lincoln (2008): “Criticalists inform poststructuralists and feminists, who in turn critique and extend the subject matter and the approach of more traditional forms of critical research” (p. 418). Critical research framed by feminist theory (working toward emancipation and change) is used throughout educational research focusing on women’s experiences (Taber, 2005; Neilsen Glenn, 1998; Gur-Ze’ev, 2005; Schram, 2003).

Feminist ideology “places gender front and center in its focus on oppressive social structures and the means to challenge and change them. It is grounded in a moral premise that assumes that the inequitable treatment of men and women is unjust” (Schram, 2003, p. 35). Supporting working mothers involves challenging power structures and systems that continue to hold women at a disadvantage in the workplace. However, to identify where change is needed, power imbalances first must be identified. According to Roy (2008), “it is the experience of knowing the distribution and dynamics of power that informs her as to *what needs to change* in this distribution” (p. 150). To effect change is to identify what needs to change and how best to do so.

Issues of equality and discrimination revolve around a common notion: power. Neoliberal values keep power in the hands of the privileged few by discouraging the collective voice of those looking in from the margins. The notion of making “wise choices” to better one’s situation means that “failure” to succeed is the fault of the individual rather than on the organizational structures of society. “If we are to fully understand the data and affect change, we must try to understand the contextual patterns and how they are sustained and controlled” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 129). Only by understanding the oppressive structures of society can they be challenged and changed.

Conducting research by looking at the experiences of individuals on the margins of knowledge production is to perform research from the margins. According to Kirby and McKenna’s (1989) publication, “research from the margins is not research on people from the margins, but research by, for, and with them” (p. 28). When participants play an active role in the research, they become not objects to be observed, but complex individuals with a goal of emancipatory learning and change. “We live in a world in which knowledge is used to maintain oppressive relations. Information is interpreted and organized in such a way that the views of a small group of people are presented as objective knowledge” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 15). By challenging the way knowledge is produced, which is the goal of much feminist research, we are questioning that monopoly of power.

Feminist research does not disregard the influence of historical bodies of research and theory; rather, a feminist perspective requires that we take the time to question the purpose, power, and perspective of knowledge; not to take data at face value. “A feminist practice of research agenda choice is not meant to completely discard or erase all of the traditional activities of scientific inquiry, but rather to provide the feminist scientist with the necessary tools to

produce interruptions or positive disruptions in the process of scientific knowledge making” (Roy, 2008, p. 154). An individual standing on the outside of knowledge production looking in has a very different story to tell than those who are nestled comfortably within the circle of power.

The five themes identified following the initial literature review served as a guide in my analysis of participant data. Using both a critical feminist theoretical lens, I looked for evidence of those themes (gendered division of labour, women’s experiences in academe, sources of support, neoliberal influences in post-secondary environments, and policies and practices designed to assist academic parents). I combined this with grounded theory which involved being receptive to emergent themes not yet identified. Grounded theory was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) who present the method of constant comparative as a way to analyze data from research done at the margins. Other researchers see the benefit of repeatedly examining data until themes emerge: “Constant comparison engages the researcher in a give and take between inductive and deductive thinking. Potential categories of meaning are said to emerge from the data, then data are carefully read to determine if those categories are valid” (Hatch, 2002, p. 26). Grounded theory places emphasis in two areas: intersubjectivity: “an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process in which all are respected as equally knowing subjects” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 129), and critical reflection on the social context which requires an examination of the social reality within which people are living. One can see the uses and connections here with feminist theory – participants are recognized as subjects and not objects, and there is critical reflection of oppressive structures.

Using an emerging type of grounded theory specifically, I did see examples of the five initial themes throughout the interview transcripts as the participants generously gave both their

time and their stories. An emerging design (Glaser 1992) counters the more rigid construction of categories used in the analysis, and instead “focuses on connecting categories and emerging theory according to a set of criteria that includes fit, work, relevance, and modifiability” (Schram, 2003, p. 73). This type of analysis allowed significant issues and themes to emerge from participant responses. Perhaps the most significant issues to emerge in this study were the availability and flexibility of on-site childcare, as well as jobs and post-docs designed specifically for mothers who have been out of the academic loop for a period of time. The fact that every participant drew attention to these issues in particular suggests to me that they are problems felt across position, discipline, institution, and province. There also seems to be great value in having a community of working mothers throughout academic departments who serve as mentors, confidantes, and support for other women.

Along with the expected themes which emerged in participant responses, there were points made which I found surprising or unexpected. I had anticipated that at least some of the women who participated in my research would rely on extended family (particularly their own parents) for childcare. On the contrary, very few had family living locally – evidence that academics rarely end up where they started geographically. This creates an almost complete dependence on public sources of childcare where spots can be expensive and difficult to secure. Here again is another argument for the availability of reliable, affordable childcare on-site for academics who have had to relocate for their positions.

This struggle for balance facing women with professional careers leads to another line of discourse in feminist research: the notion of hiring others to perform childcare and housework duties. Feminist inquiry focuses on the imbalance of power in society, which in this case is not necessarily a gendered imbalance. If a woman must rely on the work of another woman in order

to attain what she perceives as “balance”, is balance truly achieved? While there are certainly individuals who have successful careers in domestic work, there is a demand for domestic workers which is often filled by immigrant workers. These women are often employed in circumstances that are exploitative and may be required to leave behind their own children in their country of origin to be raised by their own extended family members. “Given the lack of affordable childcare and other socialized alternatives to housework, there has been a growing demand in Canada for live-in domestic workers as an individual solution to the crisis of the domestic sphere” (Luxton et al., 1990, p. 15). More recent data which reflects this power disparity of women hiring other women to provide support where society has failed to is a continuing trend for many professional women (Blackett, 2011; Maher & Staab, 2005; Tobio & Gorfinkiel, 2007).

Systemic discrimination requires a united voice if it is to be changed. Creating a divide and imbalance of power between women perpetuates this crisis of childcare and reinforces patriarchal values. “Housework and childcare have often been thought of as experiences that unite women as a group. But the domestic worker solution to the crisis of the domestic sphere has the potential to divide women... A power differential always exists...sets women against each other” (Luxton et al., 1990, p. 16). Handing off childcare to another woman reinforces patriarchal, neoliberal expectations that one’s work is not affected by the “distractions” of life. These are not trends that women should conform to; they are evidence of the work that yet needs to be done. This solution is problematic in redressing the gender inequality in domestic responsibilities because the work is placed onto the shoulders of other, more marginalized groups of women. In addition, most women cannot afford to hire a full-time, in-home caregiver and

housekeeper. Therefore, institutional supports such as good quality, accessible and affordable daycare centres need to be provided.

Another responsibility faced by many women today is care for aging parents or other relatives (Singleton, 2000; Carmichael et al., 2008; Gray & Hughes, 2005). This trend is likely to continue as women are having children later and later in life. Luxton et al. (1990) “used the categories of ‘motherwork,’ ‘wifework,’ and ‘housework’ to analyze the unwaged caregiving work that women do in the household. To these tasks should be added ‘daughterwork.’ This is the job of eldercare, undertaken in North America and Europe for the most part by daughters and daughters-in-law” (p. 13). Having both children and elders to care for can cause considerable stress for women, particularly if they also maintain careers outside the home. In some cases jobs are abandoned in order to care for elder relatives. This particularly affects working women, as their salary is typically lower than that of their partner (Luxton et al., 1990), resulting in the “logical” decision that women be the ones to stay home. For academic women who often have to relocate for work, one wonders how they are affected by the care of their elder relatives who no longer live locally. How many women will have to abandon academic positions in order to return home and care for family, or find that their career trajectories are affected by responsibilities of elder care? How will these decisions be made and how can we support women who fulfill these roles?

Forming a collective voice with which to challenge oppressive structures and practices that discriminate against women – all women – is, in my opinion, to identify as a feminist. Depending on who you ask and the context of the question, the definition of a feminist varies greatly, to the point where some women hesitate to claim that title for fear that they be seen as stereotypically radical activists. According to Luxton et al. (1990), “feminism is a social

movement which like all liberation movements represents diverse points of view and interests. It does not possess a monolithic philosophy or a unified set of strategies” (p. 22). All participants in this research study identified as a feminist, but some were quick and careful to define what that meant to them, dispelling that radical image. For them, feminism generally required providing supports for women that would enable them to participate fully in society without experiencing discrimination based on their gender.

The purpose of critical feminist research then is to raise awareness of power imbalances, to question and challenge how knowledge is created as well as who creates it and for what purpose. “Critical and feminist scholars produce critiques of the perceived material world in an effort to expose the structures that ensure the maintenance of control by those in power... With the exposure of oppression comes the call for awareness, resistance, solidarity, and revolutionary transformation” (Hatch, 2002, p. 17). Solidarity is necessary for the collective voice of women to emerge. Only then can we hope to achieve a cultural change in academic institutions whereby women feel comfortable taking advantage of the policies which should be made available to them regarding caregiving and tenure. Women may be concerned that certain actions such as extending the tenure clock, or stating extenuating circumstances on research grant applications, may be unjustly held against them in the future. The academy should represent a supportive, flexible environment for all academics, particularly mothers and those who engage in caregiving work.

If women continue to take on primary responsibility for childcare, there must be policies and supports in place which will enable them to successfully combine this role with a career, if they should choose this path. “The way government policy and laws develop – the kinds of programs that are implemented, the priorities that are set – often hinge on research... We believe

that people should have the opportunity to inform themselves, to participate in discussion and policy formation and advance their interests through political action” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 170). Therefore, feminism is not about duplicating male support structures for women; rather, it is about supporting women in ways that are necessary for them to be able to rise to their full potential.

“Unless you support women in their role as mother, you will never get equality of opportunity” (Hornosty, 1998, p. 180).

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

1. Can you please start by telling me a little bit about your current position at the university and academic employment thus far?
2. Could you describe your current family situation?
3. Are you in a relationship currently? Married or common-law?
4. How many children do you have? What are their ages?
5. Have you always wanted to combine a family and a career? What were your thoughts around that decision?
6. Regarding your upbringing, did your mother work outside of the home? How much of her choices influenced yours?
7. When you met your current partner, at what stage of your academic career were you?
8. Did you discuss career paths and goals as well as family plans with your partner?
9. Was your career a consideration when deciding to have children?
10. How have you made decisions around childcare? Who has been involved?
11. How are childcare tasks distributed among you and your partner?
12. Do you rely on extraparental sources of childcare? If so, what sources do you use?
13. What factors led to the decision to use that type of childcare?
14. Are you satisfied with the type of childcare you currently use? Is there anything you would like to change about it?
15. How flexible is your childcare provider (re: pickup/drop off times, changing days, vacations, etc.)?
16. What happens when your child is sick? Who stays home with the child? How did you reach this decision?
17. Can you tell me a little bit about your decision to pursue a career in academia? What influenced you? What are your ultimate goals for your career?

18. How much of your time is spent in various academic roles (teaching, research, administration...)? Are you content with that time distribution?
19. Do you feel that you have enough flexibility in your career to honour the needs of your family? If no, what are the challenges you face?
20. Do you feel supported by your institution and colleagues as an academic mother?
21. What is your overall experience with role-balancing work and family life?
22. Have you received advice from other women about role-balancing? Was it helpful?
23. Would you change anything about the way you have thus far combined work and family life?
24. What would you like to see in terms of supports to help mothers more fully participate in the competitive academic climate?
25. If you could provide a piece of advice for new PhD graduates who are looking to combine family life with a career in an academic institution, what would you like to say?
26. Would you say that you identify as a feminist? What does this term mean to you and for you as a woman?

Is there anything else that you would like to add or bring attention to?

Thank you so much for your time and participation.

Appendix B

Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Dr.

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research study which is the basis for a Masters of Arts in Education thesis project. The title of the study is, *Dueling Clocks: How Women Academics Balance Childcare and the Road to Tenure*, and explores the challenges faced by academic mothers of young children as they attempt to raise their families and obtain tenured academic appointments. Policies and practices in place to assist academic mothers will also be discussed, along with their influence over women's career decisions. By providing your experience as a woman raising a family while pursuing an academic career, it is my hope that attention will be brought to the issue of role-balancing for women.

A digital audio recorder will be used to record the conversation, which may last approximately forty-five minutes. You will be asked to sign forms agreeing to the audio recording of the interview and the visual recording of the visual representation; you may withdraw your participation at any time before or during the study. You are not obliged to answer any questions that you do not wish to. You will also be asked to provide a simple visual representation of your time and how it is divided between work and family responsibilities. The end product will be captured using a digital camera.

Should participants not be available for a face-to-face interview, telephone interviews will be conducted and recorded using a digital audio recorder with a telephone attachment. In this case, the visual representation will be modified to a computer attachment (sent by email) which participants can complete and return to a secure email account.

The interview will be partially transcribed into text, and you will be sent a copy of this transcript. You may make edits to the transcript at this point if you wish to, and you have the right to request that sections are deleted from the study. The transcripts will be used to write and present a Masters thesis at the end of the academic year. In the future, information and quotes from this study may be used to provide data for academic and/or conference papers and presentations.

The data will be kept in a locked cupboard and will be destroyed five years after completion of the study. The following precautions will be followed to keep your identity confidential: You will be referred to in general terms or by an alternate title, and you will be identified in any publications that come from this research by this alternate title; features that may risk identification will be changed or deleted from the transcript (i.e. names of colleagues or family members). Only Erin Careless and thesis committee members will have access to your transcripts.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and it entails minimal risk to you. Discussing your experiences may be uncomfortable and/or upsetting at times, and you have the right to change the subject of conversation, or withdraw your participation should you wish to. Recounting your experiences as an academic mother may bring focus to this growing issue of role-balancing, and may provide valuable insight for those who will follow in these footsteps. Your signature at the end of this letter is an indication that you have read the above information and agree to be interviewed. You will be given a copy of this letter and form to keep in your files.

If you have any questions about the research study, please feel free to contact Erin Careless at erin.careless@msvu.ca or by phone at (902) 423-3730. If during or after the study you have any concerns about the way in which the research was conducted, please feel free to contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca. Thank you for considering my request to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Erin Careless

I have read through the above letter and agree to be interviewed for the study:

Print Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

I would like to have my transcript returned for review

a) Electronically _____

b) Paper copy (mailed to me) _____

Informed Consent – Audio Recording

I have read through the attached letter detailing the research study, *Dueling Clocks: How Women Academics Balance Childcare and the Road to Tenure*, and agree to have my voice digitally recorded for the purpose of the study. I realize that I have the right to request that the audio recorder be turned off at any time, and any information I do not wish to share I can request to have deleted from the transcripts.

Print Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Participant Contact Information Form

I require the following information in order to contact you to send out a copy of the transcript for review and also to send you a summary report at the end of the research study. This information will be kept confidential, stored in a locked space, and will be destroyed after the study is completed. Only fill out the information you wish to share (i.e. if you only wish to share work contact information). If you should have a change of address or contact information at some point during the study or before you receive a copy of the final summary report, please remember to contact me so that I can make a note of this to ensure you receive the documents from this research. Thank you.

PLEASE PRINT

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Home Address

Work Address

Telephone Number(s): _____ (home)

_____ (work) _____ (cell)

Email Address(es): _____ (home)

_____ (work)

Transcript Identification Number (to be filled in by researcher): _____

Informed Consent – Visual Recording

I have read through the attached letter detailing the research study, *Dueling Clocks: How Women Academics Balance Childcare and the Road to Tenure*, and agree to have the visual element of my interview recorded via a picture on a digital camera for the purpose of the study. I realize that I have the right to request that the digital camera not be used to take a picture, and I can request that the picture not be used at any time during the study.

Print Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____
