Navigating the World of Academia as a Mother and Contingent Faculty Member: A Narrative Inquiry

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NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF ACADEMIA AS A MOTHER AND A CONTINGENT FACULTY MEMBER: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Kathryn Fair Ledford
December 2012

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Although women hold many professional positions, they are still held accountable to present gendered customs like parenting children. Additionally, women who work in higher education are surrounded by masculine norms. For academic women who are also mothers like the author, many obstacles confront their management of the interlocking spheres of home, work and self. An examination of these women’s narratives will illuminate how women navigate the world of academia, while maintaining our roles as mothers and individual identities.

For women who are mothers of children under six years old, and who are also contingent faculty members at four-year institutions, both policies and literature in higher education provide scant support for faculty work and mothering. This dissertation aims to add layers to existing research and open the doors for additional research. An overarching feminist framework was used to show how mothers make meaning of the world around them.
DEDICATION

To Jeremy, Harper and Beckett
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CHAPTER ONE

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

“Although men also need to combine work and family, women are the ones who bear the physical and cultural demands of parenting most heavily, and so theirs were the stories we sought” (Evans & Grant, 2008, p. xxiii).

Chapter one outlines the six chapters of the dissertation. The chapter presents an argument about why there is a problem within higher education that warranted research. Additionally, the chapter highlights how there is a gap in the literature that could be filled through the study. The purpose of the study is then presented with the subsequent research questions, which were answered through the research design including the theoretical framework and the methodology. The purpose of the study’s significance is included and the limitations that were encountered. Finally, a definition of relevant terms was presented.

Nature of the Problem

In the past 50 years, women have been entering the workforce at an increasing rate. For example, in 1948 17% of married women worked outside of the home. In 1995, the number rose to 70% (Cohany & Sock, 2007). Now, in the 21st century, it is not uncommon for women with young children to be working. In 1975, 39% of mothers with children under the age of six worked, and in 2010, 63.9% of women with children under the age of six held jobs (US Department of Labor, 2010). Women are no longer tied
solely to the profession of homemaker; but women remain bound to societal gender roles, such as bearing most of the responsibility of raising children (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Williams, 2000). For women who have young children, the responsibilities of both parenting children and working can be daunting.

From a historical perspective, the issue of working mothers is germane particularly to the present third-wave feminist movement in the United States. The first wave of the women’s moment, dating from the mid 1800s, was primarily concerned with the right for women to vote. After women won this right in 1920, they became increasingly dissatisfied with social inequities. Although there was growing discontent in the early 20th Century, the official second-wave feminist movement began in the 1960s in response to political and social injustice. Many women felt the second-wave feminist movement did not achieve its goals (Davidson & Hatcher, 2002). In response to the perceived failure, the present third-wave feminist movement began in the early 1990s. During the 1990s, many women, like the social activists and feminists hooks and Lorde, felt the first and second wave feminist movement dealt largely with the needs of educated, White, middle class women, as they sought to embrace all women (Carillo, 2008; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984). To place the current problem in its present historical context, it was important to note the transitions of the women’s movement specifically as it emerged in academia.

Traditionally, higher education did not welcome women either as students or professors (Langdon, 2001). There was a time when women were not allowed to attend public academic institutions (Evans & Grant, 2008; Shakeshaft, 1981). For example,
Clemson did not allow women until the mid 20th Century. Although women can now pursue terminal degrees, the academe has been limiting women as to access to faculty status (Long, Allison & McGinnis, 1993). For instance, women are largely underrepresented in the number of tenured professors on college campuses (Long, Allison & McGinnis, 1993). Additionally, many campuses lack women mentors for new faculty. Moreover, mothering children has an effect on how high faculty women rise on the academic professional ladder (Baker, 2002).

The academic institution is a patriarchal institution that is encircled by masculine norms such as a male-centered tenure clock as well as disproportionately more male faculty than women (Heward, 1994; Ward, 2000; Ward-Wolf-Wendel, 2006). The male-centered tenure clock reflects how the steps to gain tenure status within higher education are often geared towards male faculty. The male tenure clock is representative of the glass ceiling in academia, which as been substantially researched (Armenti, 2004; Baker, 2001; Collins, Chrisler & Quina, 1998; Heward, 1994; Williams, 2005). As evidence there is a disproportionate number of male tenured faculty than women tenured faculty (Ward, 2000; Ward-Wolf-Wendel, 2006).

Working in higher education has many effects on a woman’s experiences, including whether she has children (Baker, 2002; Perna, 2003). For instance, in order to combat the male-centered tenure clock, some women choose to either not have children or to not work towards a tenure status. A mother’s struggles represent an additional layer to a women’s experience working in the academe (Finley, 2008). Finley’s study showed how motherhood further affected a woman’s experiences within higher education.
Although there is literature about women who work (Baker & Baker, 2001; Cohany & Sock, 2007; US Department of Labor, 2019), women who work in academia (Armenti, 2004; Cohen & Brawer, 2004; Long, Allison, & McGinnis, 1993; Murray, 2007), and mothers who work in academia (Evans & Grant, 2008; Farrell, 2006; Grenier, 2008; Perna, 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel 2004; 2005; 2007), there remains a gap in the literature that warrants critical examination. Specifically, there is scant literature about mothers with young babies and toddlers who work in academia as contingent faculty. Further, as more institutions, specifically four-year institutions, combat budget decreases by hiring more contingent faculty, more working mothers are likely to join this faculty sector (Bradley 2008; Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998; Monks 2009). Since the US Department of Labor gathers data about mothers who have children under the age of six, in the pre-school ages, women with children under the age of six will be the primary voices sought for this study.

Further, in addition to filling the gaps in the literature, it was my aim to present research that can work towards changing the patriarchal academic system (Schmidt, 2009; Thompson, 2001). The information and data from this study provided insight into and future implications for practice and policy.

**Statement of the Problem**

The stories of mothers who work in academia are not being heard (Baker, 2002). Also, our needs are not being met (Bradley, 2008; Center for the Education of Women, 2005). Furthermore, when women work in an academic institution, we face barriers and
obstacles that need to be researched and addressed (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Long, Allison & McGinnis, 1993).

A narrative inquiry of mothers’ lived experiences as contingent faculty may begin to fill a gap in the literature. By listening to women’s voices, women can examine the problems within our academic institution and work towards embracing the interconnection of the spheres of home, work and self. Findings could lead to activism and policy change in the future.

**Purpose of the Study**

This investigative study provided a way to see how mothers with children under the age of six, who are also contingent faculty, juggle obligations while also trying to maintain a sense of autonomy within their professional lives. In many cases, new mothers faced the conflict of working in low paying jobs as contingent faculty members that did not cover the cost of childcare, with added concerns about being away from their children (Knowles et. al, 2009). This conundrum raised several questions for this study, including the following research questions.

**Research Questions**

The study addressed a paucity of literature about mothers with children under the age of six, who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions. Presented are a collection of narratives, including my own story, to add a layer in the knowledge about mothers of young children in academia.
Specifically, the following research questions guided this study:

- How do we, as mothers with children under the age of six, who are also contingent faculty members, make meaning of the complexity of the interlocking spheres of home, work and self?
- What is the motivation and what do we hope to achieve within our combined personal and professional lives?
- How will our narratives show how we live our experiences within the academe?
- How are our narratives a representation and critique of the present academic culture?

Through this narrative inquiry, I reflected on those questions, showed perspective and suggested ways to help navigate the complexity of motherhood and academia. Narrative inquiry was the research design that most effectively helped me add my own voice and perspective to the data analysis since I, too, am a mother and contingent faculty member at a four-year institution. It was my hope that this exploration allowed me to more fully understand the lived experience of new mothers who are contingent faculty members. I also hoped that by discovering and revealing my own self through the narratives, I could give deeper connection to the research and work towards illuminating the struggles on the path before us.

This study serves as the foundation for much more scholarly work to come. By using narrative inquiry as a method to fully embrace my position in the research, the analysis contributed a different perspective to a persistent challenge. This is a growing
area that merits further scholarship; this research study served as the gateway for additional research to give voice to those of us who have often felt silenced, marginalized and ignored.

**Theoretical Framework**

To illustrate the interlocking spheres of the home, work and self that encircle our lives, a feminist theoretical framework guided the research (Armenti, 2004; Williams, 2005). A feminist perspective offered a means for selected women to voice their stories across the multiple roles they live as individuals, mothers and faculty members.

Even though feminist theory was the main theoretical perspective for the literature review, critical theory was also used when it supports feminist theory (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997; Bloom, 1998). Furthermore, I illustrated where critical theory does not support the overarching feminist perspective. In addition, postcolonial theory provided insight into the feminist perspective about patriarchal institutions.

**Research Design and Methodology**

This study was a narrative inquiry, which provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Creswell, 2009). For this study, narrative inquiry explored how new mothers with toddlers under the age of six, who are contingent faculty, navigated the world of academia. As one step in the process of developing the data generation phase of narrative inquiry, techniques of autoethnography were used to both include and separate my story of motherhood as a contingent faculty
member (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). This autoethnography appropriately fit into what Connelly and Clandinin (2006) described as the starting place of narrative inquiry, the process of “imagining a life space” (p. 481). Since the research design resided in the constructivist paradigm, narrative inquiry was based on interpretation and the social construction of reality. Meanings are created through interaction and interpretation. How people reacted over time in specific social settings was also important.

Narrative inquiry enabled me to more fully understand my lived experience in higher education through the insights of other women in a similar situation. By discovering and revealing myself through my autoethnography, I was able to give deeper connection to other mothers from whom I elicited narratives. Narrative inquiry offered at least three elements conducive to this work, temporality, sociality and place.

In narrative inquiry, the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place allow “specific dimensions of an inquiry space” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). Temporality acknowledges the importance of past, present and future within the space. The study allowed participants to reflect on their experiences, see present situations, and look towards the future. Second, sociality allows narrative inquirers to look at personal and social conditions simultaneously. In this study, the researcher’s roles and assumptions were critical. Finally, place impacted the stories. The location of the academies where we worked affected the narratives. The three elements of temporality, sociality and place enabled me to expand upon our lived experiences.
In order to collect data, I used an interview protocol that followed the techniques of both semi-structured and interactive interviewing. In addition to self-reflections, I conducted lengthy interviews with each of the participants. Additionally, I held a one-hour interview session with each woman in order for her to verify and approve the interview transcriptions. I used several forms of data collection in the research design, including, field notes, personal journals, the participant’s journals, self-observation data, and artifacts such as personal letters and emails.

Following data collection, I coded and categorized the data (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). For narrative inquirers, category building is embedded in power relations between researchers and participants. I gathered additional perspectives and highlighted my own lived experience to support the analysis of the combined narratives. I used various techniques, such as member-checks, to take the organized information and discover connections from them.

In narrative inquiry, the importance of validity and reliability is different than its standards in quantitative research. Since the story of the lived experience from the perspective of the researcher is critically important, the reader’s reaction to the narrative plays a significant role. Ellis et. al (2011) explained, “reliability refers to narrative credibility, validity, about whether the story could be true” (p. 10). They continued, “generalizability moves from respondent to readers, always tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them and their experience or about the lives of others they know” (p. 10). For narrative inquirers, the research is tested by whether or not, among other things, it has an emotional, believable impact on the readers.
Narrative inquiry was a research design that offered a means to generating answers to the research questions. By being able to find connections with other women who experienced the same commonplaces and embracing my own position in the research, new perspectives on the lives of mothers who are contingent faculty members was voiced.

**Significance of the Study**

Although there was scholarship that is related to the research questions, there was a gap in the research. Women who work as part-time contingent faculty members do not occupy much space in scholarly academic literature. Furthermore, the voice for mothers in this faculty sector was absent. The study design included autoethnography as a means to imagine the life spaces of other mothers who have lived the challenges of contingent faculty within the interlocking expectations of home and their own aspirations.

Although our stories are a reflection of a particular culture, our voices give testament to larger problems within the patriarchal academic institution. This study allowed me to provide other women a space to tell their narratives and to reveal my own stories. By recounting our lived experiences, and finding commonality as a community of women, our narratives can unite for a larger meta-narrative of the experience of mothers of young children in academia.
Limitations

There are certainly limitations to the study. For instance, since I was involved in the research, I was constantly aware of the power hierarchy between the participants and myself. Ellis et. al (2011) pointed out:

Researchers maintain and value interpersonal ties with their participants, thus making relational ethics more complicated. Participants often begin as or become friends through the research process. We do not normally regard them as impersonal subjects only to be mined for data. Consequently, ethical issues afflicted with friendship become an important part of the research process and product. (p. 9/19)

To create relationships and a community with the women I interviewed, I was constantly aware of my role as the researcher and the certain biases I brought to the study. The initial step of conducting an autoethnography provided means to elicit other women’s narratives as well as for limiting how much I revealed of my story in the practice of active listening to the narratives of others.

Another limitation of the research design was the ethical lines that could be blurred when a relationship is established. Since narrative inquiry depends on a close, communal relationship, those boundaries may have been altered (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

I focused on women who are new mothers, with children under the age of six, who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions within a 50-mile radius of my residence in the South. Therefore, my sampling selection was compromised. My plan
was to identify a variety of women with different backgrounds, such as from different age ranges and ethnicities, to gain a deeper understanding of our needs. However, because of the geographical boundaries and since I wanted to form strong connections with the women, the data collection was not as diverse as expected as it might have been with a different commonplace of place.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined to clarify my intent in the study.

- *Academia*. Academia defines higher education. The *academe* is the physical location of the college or university where the participants are employed; *academia* encompasses the participant’s profession.

- *Narrative Inquiry*. Narrative inquiry was the qualitative methodology used in the research design. Unlike narrative that defines the story, narrative inquiry is a research methodology that uses narrative form to examine the commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place within a research design (Chang, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Juzwik, 2010; Xu & Connelly, 2010).

- *Temporality*. Within narrative inquiry, temporality is the relationship of the study to time (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

- *Sociality*. In this commonplace of narrative inquiry, sociality is the tendency to socialize with others and to form social groups (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).
• **Place.** The last commonplace of narrative inquiry, place, is where the narrative occurs (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

• **Metaphor.** Metaphor is an important component of a narrative inquiry. Metaphor is a narrative device that denotes when one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest an analogy between them.

• **Mothers.** Mothers in the research study are defined as women who have any number of children under the age of six. Since the US Department of Labor (2010) defines pre-school aged babies and toddlers as any number of children under the age of six, this was the population studied.

• **Contingent Faculty.** Often referred to as adjunct faculty, contingent faculty are not on the tenure track and are considered part-time employees at a university or college (AAUP, 2011).

**Organization of the Study**

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an overview of the study. The second chapter consists of the literature review. The third chapter outlines the methodology. The fourth chapter is a summation of the pilot study. The fifth chapter outlines the major findings of the full study. Finally, the sixth chapter highlights the major findings of the dissertation, illustrates how these findings affect higher education, and offers implications for future research.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is composed of a review of the literature regarding mothers with children under the age of six, who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions. This review examines applicable research and elaborates on the gaps that are present in the scholarship. The analysis works towards “fulfilling the goals of coverage, synthesis, methodology, significance and rhetoric” (Boote & Biele, 2005, p. 8). By presenting previous research in the systematic categories of women and work, followed by women working in academia, and concluding with mothers working in academia, the literature review set the foundation for the research study (Archbald, 2008; Lee & Kamler, 2008). Through a synthesis of the data in a new perspective, the review proves the significance of the study, particularly the gaps in the research (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Galvan, 2009).

By beginning with a contextual review of existing research and historical data which transitions into a thematic review and concluding with a short methodological review, this type of literature review illuminated a transparent argument that has generativity through sound research. For instance, by situating the study in the historical context of the women’s movement, the literature review showed how the theoretical and contextual frameworks align with the present women’s movement.

In order to conduct the literature review, multiple methods were utilized following the approach of Boote and Beile (2005). Databases, journals and books were employed. Beginning in the spring of 2008, data was collected relevant to women working in
academia. During this time, I used many of the databases accessed through the Clemson library, including but not limited to: Education Research Complete, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, SocINDEX with FULL TEXT, and Teacher Reference Center. In the fall of 2010 I began work on the pilot study, which was the foundation for the dissertation. I conducted a lengthy keyword search with the following combinations: mother, success, academia, mentor, feminism, PhD, higher education, feminist theory, critical theory, feminist, education and support.


Most of the books used came from the reference lists of the most applicable journal articles. The books most referenced in the literature review were Mama, PhD (Evans & Grant, 2008), Power lines: On the subject of feminist alliances (Carillo, 2008), Career Strategies for Women in Academe (Collins, Chrisler & Quina, 1998), Under the sign of hope: Feminist methodology and narrative interpretation (Bloom, 1998).

By beginning with a contextual review of existing research and historical data, which transitioned into a thematic review, and concluding with a short methodological review, this type of literature review illuminated a transparent argument that has generativity through sound research. For instance, by situating the study in the historical context of the women’s movement, the literature review showed how the theoretical and contextual frameworks align with the present women’s movement.
**Research Questions**

The following descriptive questions guided the literature review:

- How do mothers with children under the age of six, who are also contingent faculty members, make meaning of the complexity of the interlocking spheres of home, work and self?

- What is the motivation and what do we hope to achieve within our combined personal and professional lives?

- How will our narratives show how we live our experiences within the academe?

- How are our narratives a representation and critique of the present culture?

The literature review built on the subject, to work towards answering the research question, lay out a systematic strategy supporting the need for the study.

**Women and Work**

To frame the study within a contemporary feminist perspective, a brief historical analysis of the three main waves of the women’s movement in the United States is presented. The analysis lays out the contextual foundation of the literature review. Since the analysis occurs during the contemporary, third-wave feminist movement, it is important to the analysis to see how history has shaped the discrimination of women and its effects on present day society.
**Historical Analysis**

The United States’ women’s movement began in the mid-1800s with women’s desire to earn the right to vote. Often noted as two of the most influential women of first-wave feminism, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott drafted the “Declaration of Sentiments,” which was discussed at the first convention for women’s rights at Seneca Falls in 1848. The “Declaration of Sentiments” which was modeled upon the Declaration of Independence, “demanded that the rights of women be acknowledged and respected by society” (Stanton, 1889, p. 70).

After women won the right to vote, in 1920 a second-wave feminist movement arose to fight against political and cultural inequalities for women. For instance, within the period of the 1920s to the 1960s, women fought for, among other things, the right to birth control and job discrimination based on sex and gender. The 1960s became the official beginning of the second-wave where activism for women entered the public’s consciousness. During this time, some key events included the Commission on the Status of Women’s 1963 report, which documented discrimination against women in all areas of life. In the same year, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*. This landmark book documented the emotional and intellectual oppression of middle class, educated women (Davidson & Hatcher, 2002).

After this book, the next influential historical moment was the passing of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sex. In 1966, the National Organization for Women was organized. In addition to this organization, many other organizations addressing the needs of women and “women’s
“liberation” began. If the first-wave feminist movement was focused on the right for women to vote, the second wave revealed how personal lives were deeply politicized (Davidson & Hatcher, 2002).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the third-wave of feminism formed as resistance to perceived failures of second-wave feminism. Additionally, unlike the second-wave of feminism that was heavily influenced by the needs of the educated middle class, third-wave feminism aimed to focus on incorporating women from many different backgrounds. Activists such as hooks and Lorde encouraged subjectivity in the feminist voice and room to note the intersection of race and gender (hooks, 1981).

Further, it is significant to situate the literature review in the historical context of the women’s movement because the study is heavily rooted in the history of women’s discrimination. Even though women have gained a voice in the political sphere, cultural and social forces have kept many women centered within the home sphere, even though many women also work (Cohany & Sock, 2007).

**Current Trends**

In 1948, only about 17% of married mothers were in the labor force. By 1995, 70% of married mothers were working or looking for work (Cohany, & Sock, 2007). Mothers have been entering the work force at large rates in the past decades, even women who have young children. In 1975, 39% of mothers with children younger than age six were in the workforce; by 2004, this number had increased to 58% (US Department of Labor, 2005). By 2010, 63.9% of women with children under the age of six were in the
workforce, and 56.5% of women with children under the age of three held jobs (US Department of Labor, 2010). The demographics illustrate women working in many professions in the present historical and societal context.

For many women who work, the flexibility of part-time employment can be appealing. Baker and Baker (2001) reported that part-time work influences the ability of mothers of preschool children working in professional occupations to successfully integrate work and family responsibilities while maintaining career opportunities.” They continued, “compared to their counterparts who worked full-time, mothers who worked in these part-time positions reported significantly greater work-family balance and did report significantly less career opportunity” (p. 56). Many women might accept part-time employment, such as the position of contingent faculty.

Since women’s equality has grown throughout the history of the women’s movement, women have entered the workforce at a steadier pace. However, the historical and social expectations of women being mothers first have played a large role. As Benschop and Brouns (2003) highlighted, “When the women are at work and away from the home, they are still affected by a masculine oppressive power structure” (p.195). Even if women do choose to enter the labor market, social and historical factors, and ties to the home, affect their professional decisions.

For all women, work is heavily influenced by historical and societal factors, but their decision might also be influenced by their education. Since some are turning away from academia because of the difficulties of working within higher education (June,
2009), people who work in academia need to be more cognizant of the factors that affect women in the academic workforce.

**Women Working in Academia**

For women who enter the workforce, and work in higher education, they face the additional battles of working in a male-dominated field that is organized around a system historically, and in many institutions still, dominated by men. Traditionally, women have not been embraced into higher education (Langdon, 2001). These sentiments are woven into the ideals of the academe. Originally, higher learning was not intended to accommodate women. As Evans and Grant (2008) explained, “Not until the mid-nineteenth century did colleges admit women, who faced discriminatory barriers such as marriage bans (which prohibited married women from teaching) into the 1950s. Some schools refused to admit women even into the 1970s” (p. xviii). For women who not only choose to earn an education but make a career within the academe, they must work within the historically restricting confines of higher education.

**Current Trends**

When women do find professional careers in higher education, they face glass ceilings and other barriers from achieving high levels of success. For example, in 2003, women received 47% of doctorates of philosophy awarded in the United States but comprised only 35% of tenured faculty. Moreover, “Only 26% of full professors were women” (Wolfinger, Mason & Goulden, 2008, p. 388). The glass ceiling of higher
education for women is an area of research that has been heavily studied (Armenti, 2004; Baker, 2001; Collins, Chrisler & Quina, 1998; Heward, 1994; Williams, 2005). For instance, in addition to women in higher ranks being less likely to be married, “Women are largely underrepresented in higher ranks in academic settings” (Long, Allison, & McGinnis, 1993, pp 705-710). Further, while the majority of faculty is female, those who maintain power and run universities are men (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Connell, 1987; Long, Allison, & McGinnis, 1993; US Department of Education, 2005).

In an article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Thornton (2004) discussed the historical effects of the male dominated environment of academia and how it has affected women working at four-year colleges. She stated, “prior to the late 1970s, more than 90 percent of full-time faculty members in the United States were men” (p. B12). She continued:

Then, in the decades following the 1972 extension to higher education of federal prohibitions against sex discrimination, more women sought and obtained positions as Professors, in 1979-80 women made up 22.9 percent of the faculty at all higher-education institutions, except those without ranks. In 2002-3 it was 36.9 percent. If current trends in the number of women earning Ph.D.’s continue, the percentage of women entering the professoriate will likely increase further. (p. B12)
Even though more women are gaining PhDs and entering the workforce, they often face battles that hinder their ability to move into tenured faculty positions. Although women are entering the field, they still constantly bump the glass ceiling.

Although more than half of women with small children work outside of the home, new mothers who work in academia face particular battles within higher education that do not seem to affect their male peers (Armenti, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2006; Perna, 2003). For example, although women work in all professional domains, it appears that choosing to work at a college or university setting plays a toll on a woman’s choice to have children (Baker, 2002; Perna, 2003). Even though almost 60% of working women have children, only 43% of female faculty members have children (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2006). On the other hand, a 1999 National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty showed that 60% of male faculty members had at least one child (Perna, 2003). As women compete against professional clocks and maternal biological clocks, they are forced to make choices about how to simultaneously pursue a professional career and find time for motherhood. The choices must be made within the society of gendered expectations (Williams, 2000).

Women who choose to leave the house and enter the workforce face historical barriers and gendered expectations. As all places of employment vary in their level of commitment to women and to motherhood, so do various academic institutions. For instance, whether women choose to work full-time or part-time at four-year colleges or at two-year colleges, their experiences vary because of the institution’s level of commitment to mothers. In order to further elaborate on why it is important to study mothers who are
contingent faculty members at four-year institutions, it is imperative to see the research regarding all women in all types of academic settings.

**Institutional Divides**

Where women work within academia plays a major factor in the effects of motherhood on their professional career. For women who work full-time at four-year universities, often the tenure clock is one of the biggest professional obstacles. For women who choose not to have children because of the tenure clock, choosing to work in academia might cause them to have to choose whether or not to have children (Wilson, 2005).

A number of articles suggested that the tenure clock is a male dominated clock that conflicts with a woman’s maternal biological clock (Ward, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2007). Although Ward and Wolf-Wendel have written about motherhood in academia from 1998 to 2007 extensively (at least one article per year), their research is solely about tenured faculty members at four-year institutions. At four-year colleges they reported, in many of the articles, that women are forced to choose between a male tenure clock system and having children. The implications for women, particularly for women who choose to have children and try to work in higher education, is profound for mothers.

Many women choose to work at community colleges as full-time employees. Perhaps women choose to work at community colleges instead of four-year colleges because two-year professors do not have to worry as much about the stress of research or
the male-based tenure clock (Ward, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2007). These sentiments are one of the driving forces of the dissertation. For instance, “In 1987, the ratio of women who worked at a community college rose from 38% to 48%” (Cohen & Brawer, 2004, p. 76) but, for women who choose to work in academia and have children, community colleges hold additional pitfalls. A recent report by the Center for the Education of Women (2005) found that community colleges offer the fewest family friendly policies.

Community colleges use low cost employees, whom some are mothers who are contingent faculty members. “Overall, the colleges have come to depend on low-cost labor to balance the budget” (Cohen & Brawer, 2004, p. 85). Four-year universities are also beginning to enjoy low-cost labor; for women who also have to figure out how to support their children, there are many damaging effects of being in the low-paid workforce. Although there has been some push to unionize community-college adjuncts, which could potentially have benefits for mothers who are in this role, two-year adjuncts have a powerfully silenced voice that is affected by the patriarchal system of academia (Collins, 2005; Holler, 2006).

Many women work part-time as adjuncts or contingent faculty members at both four-year and two-year colleges (Baker & Baker, 2002; Murray, 2007). For instance, in 1975, only 30.2% of all faculty were employed part-time. In 2005, part-time faculty represented 48% of all faculty (Monks, 2009). Some authors noted the difficulties of part-time work and the implications of part-time work for women working in academia (Louis, 2006; 2009; Morstad, 2008).
Contingent faculty must combat their own problems within the patriarchal workforce. First, although contingent faculty do not have to fight for tenure, they face other sticking points that increase the conflicts between work and family life. In the past ten years, there have been numerous articles regarding the work of contingent faculty and their working conditions (Collins, 2005; Gravois, 2006; Holler, 2006; June, 2009; Louis, 2008, 2009; Morstad, 2008; Schmidt, 2009) and even articles specifically about women who are in this role (Farrell, 2006; Thornton, 2004; Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, there have been articles written about the plight of contingent faculty in journals such Academe (Bradley, 2004) to conference papers at various meetings like the American Sociological Association (Schutz, 2004). There are articles and conference papers about the professional environment of contingent faculty members, but this literature does not mention the specific needs of mothers who are also in this role (Bradley 2008; Monks 2009). The voice of mothers in this role is hushed.

Cultural Significance

For women who work, they are faced with the expectation of bearing most of the child rearing and taking care of the domestic sphere (Armenti, 2004; Baker, 2001; Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005; Williams, 2005). As Davidson and Hatcher explained (2002), “The evidence that the woman’s sphere is a social construction lies in part in the hard and constant work required to build and repair its boundaries” (p. 47). Although women are entering the workforce at higher rates, they remain bound by cultural expectations that are often bound to the history of women’s
discrimination. One way that women are bound to the history of women’s discrimination is the power constraints that keep women disadvantaged under men.

The power constraints that occur between men and women are a critical aspect of the feminist analysis (Connell, 1987; Harstock, 1983; Williams, 2005). Davidson and Hatcher (2002) suggested, “The reconstruction of gender relations is related to major issues of power, for we live in a world which authority has traditionally validated itself by its distance from the feminine and from what is understood to be effeminate” (p. 55). By illuminating the gender effects, the research study can “give power no place to hide” (p. 56). Further, as gender relations are highlighted, the study can begin to work towards change as we begin to celebrate our narratives.

When women enter the workforce, they are aware of current trends, institutional divides, and cultural expectations that lie before them. Although many women pursue doctorate degrees and enter tenure faculty positions, many choose to drop out of full-time employment and work as contingent faculty. Although there is a vast amount of literature about contingent faculty members, and even those that discuss women adjunct faculty members, most of the research does not discuss the conflicts that arise for new mothers who are in this situation. The articles suggest that there are problems within the current system, but the researchers do not look at mothers who are in these roles. Therein lies the greatest gap in the research.
Mothers Working in Academia

It is critical for the research study to examine the research literature regarding mothers who work in academia in all types of academic settings to gain a larger perspective of the challenges that women experience. Following this assessment, reiteration of why looking specifically at new mothers who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions was examined.

Full-Time or Tenured Faculty

For women who work full-time at four-year universities with small children, they face the pressures of a male environment, with the added pressures of raising children (Evans & Grant, 2008; Louis, 2006). They face particular battles against the male-tenure clock and conflicts that arise when the male-tenure clock does not run in succinct with their maternal-biological clocks. Further, Evans and Grant (2008) suggested, “The academic world offers only an illusion of flexibility for women who wish to work in it and be mothers” (p. 90).

The work of Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004; 2005; 2007) most accurately reflected the emerging research in the area of mothers who work in academia who are on the tenure track. Many of the participants in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s studies discussed the following themes: (a) fear, (b) recognition of power, (c) finding balance, (d) the second shift, (e) birth time clocks, (f) gendered expectations and inequalities, and (g) a tenured male model within the institution.
Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) noted how women in academia juggle motherhood with their professional careers. Perna (2003) noted how often women experience feelings of not feeling “good enough” (p. 500). Jones (1997) highlighted how in order to fight the “ideal worker norms” women choose to work at lower tier research institutions. For the aforementioned authors, choice is an illusion because of the present cultural mandate of allegiance to family. Like the work of Armenti (2004), Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006), Perna (2003) and Jones (1997) gave recommendations on how to change patriarchal academic structures.

For many women working in academia and as mothers “success hinges on childcare” (Evans & Grant, 2008, p. 163) and the ability to keep family and work in separate spheres. The aforementioned themes are very significant for faculty mothers, especially for mothers who do not keep family and professional careers in separate spheres (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007; Williams, 2005; Wilson, 2005). When motherhood and academia mix, women often have to try and use various strategies to maintain both their personal and professional careers.

Armenti (2004) used a critical feminist lens for studying women within the academe on tenure track who juggle both motherhood and academia at four-year institutions. In her work, she used a critical feminist framework to look at how tenure clocks are affected by a woman’s reproductive age (Armenti, 2004). In her empirical study on the maternal decision of women professors, Armenti discussed the “May baby” phenomenon where female faculty try to have their children during the summer months and often try to hide their pregnancies during the academic school year as to not cause
strife within the department. Since colleges are focused on a male model, or on a system that advantages men over women, problems arise for women in academics who are forced to either conceal their pregnancies or choose to not have any children at all (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2007). Armenti argued that institutions need to acknowledge the female life-course and create innovative and progressive academic career trajectories.

In an analysis by Ragins and Cotton (1996), the researchers showed ways women have trouble finding mentors within the organizations they work. Women face a number of gender-related barriers in gaining a mentor. Women also find it more difficult than men to initiate a mentoring relationship. For example, when a female must look for a male mentor, the situation raises three potential barriers: sexual issues, sex-role expectations and opportunities for meeting mentors. Many of the study’s findings were noteworthy. For instance, the lack of upper level female administrators at the college level forced young academic women to have a cross-gender mentoring relationship; this lead to barriers and hurdles within the relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1996).

The researchers noted 53% percent of the sample of women reported having mentoring relationships. Although the difference was not significant, men were more likely than women to have a mentoring relationship. Fifty-five percent of the men reported current or previous protégé experience, 49% for the women. The study also found that women were more likely than men to have a mentor of the opposite gender. Fifty-three percent of the women had a cross-gender mentor relationship as opposed to 20% of men. This study demonstrated that women need mentors, but their lack of
experience as well as lack of female mentors may make it difficult for them to gain a mentor. The findings are important in academic institutions for women, particularly women who are also mothers, because mentoring is a strategy that might help women find support within the institution.

There is literature that suggests women, many of whom are mothers, are pushed-out of academia (Stockdell-Giesler & Ingalls, 2007). There appears to be an alarming trend in academia. Either women choose to abandon the profession entirely or they are forced to step down to smaller positions (June, 2009).

**Part-Time or Untenured**

Even though many of the factors that affect full-time, tenured mothers affect contingent faculty, there are some noteworthy differences. Although there is very little research about mothers who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions, there is some research about mothers who are untenured faculty in other domains. For instance, there is some notable literature about new mothers who are doctoral students.

In the studies about mothers who are doctoral students, many scholars discussed the difficulties of juggling school with the demands of being a new mother (Grenier, 2008; Williams, 2007). Farrell (2006) noted how some doctoral students lose grant money when they become pregnant. Many of the graduate students discussed feelings of guilt, frustration and isolation, but often many of these women did go on to earn their degrees.
Following the constraints of graduate school, doctoral students are often faced with the male tenure clock (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Additionally, they are influenced by the demands and constraints of the patriarchal academic institution they hope to join. Alarmingly, reports suggested that many of the graduate students would not gain tenure status (Long, Allison, & McGinnis, 1993; Wolfinger, Mason & Goulden, 2008). Although where a person works is ultimately their freedom, often the choices are constrained by people’s early gender socializations (Wolf-Wendel & Twombly, 2007, p 278). When doctoral students do not gain tenure, some choose to work as contingent faculty.

Two authors, who have noted difficulties with motherhood and being a contingent faculty member, are Wolf-Wendel and Twombly (2007). In their analysis, the authors noted that a two-year college, as contingent faculty position, is a good way for women to be able to juggle the demands of work and family life. They also reported that like with women at other institutions, they also felt the strain of the second-shift, lack of support and guilt for leaving their children. Improper funding also caused strains. The study concluded that while some women chose to work as contingent faculty because of the flexibility and the decreased demands of publishing, others felt they had to be contingent faculty because of the unreasonable work expectations at the four-year colleges and universities (Wolf-Wendel & Twombly, 2007). Because of the additional financial concerns of contingent faculty members, in addition to lack of job security, women would also benefit greatly from peer support. Additionally, their strains are similar to the
feelings of anxiety for women who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions (Schneider, 1999).

As tenured faculty members need support in higher education, contingent faculty and faculty who are untenured mothers need support. Since they make less money and have even less support, for example, paid maternity leave, on site childcare, this group of women might have a strong need for mentoring. Motherhood for contingent faculty mothers adds an additional layer of lack of support (Finley, 2008). A feminist model of mentoring is a strategy that would help contingent faculty mothers find help through a village of their peers (Ragins & Cotton, 1996). This model echoes the sentiment of Evans & Grant (2008), “We believe full-time parents with doctorates and other graduate degrees share many issues and experiences without realizing it, and we have found that strength comes in identifying others with similar goals, values, and frustrations, and banding together” (p. 182). Mothers do, in fact, still need a community of their peers for support.

When women opt-out or are pushed out of tenured faculty positions, they often choose to take contingent faculty positions (Evans & Grant, 2008) but, being a contingent faculty member does not decrease the threat of the phenomenon of being opted-out or pushed out of their jobs. Women in higher paid, more esteemed positions, are forced to leave their jobs or step down, in able to also achieve the gendered expectations of also being a good mother. Women in contingent positions feel the pressures as well. Often many women who are new mothers, because of lack of support, gendered expectations, and the male system, feel that they must leave academia completely. Research needs to be conducted regarding new mothers who are contingent faculty members. Researchers
need to honor the historical actions of mothers and work towards making academia a place where women’s minds and maternal bodies can be celebrated.

In one study Evans and Grant (2008) noted:

The university has the potential to be a radically friendly-work environment…The university is, theoretically, an environment which places prime value upon the individual mind, whether it is teaching or learning. It would be wholly logical to extend that value to the individual’s body, life, and family, which enable the mind to function. (p. 188)

It is time to use these words and work towards creating a better future for women within higher education.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Feminist theory was the overarching theoretical perspective for this study (Armenti, 2004; Williams, 2005), however, critical theory and postcolonial theory were addressed within their relationship to feminist theory (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997; Bloom, 1998; Harris, 1993). For instance, critical theory, like feminist theory, challenges and is critical of existing political and social forces. Postcolonial theory offers a way to further investigate colonization within higher education. First, it is important to note the feminist theoretical framework of the research that gives nod to the significance of the union between all mothers who work in academia.

There are many scholars who have focused on the hierarchal nature of academia and how women are often disadvantaged. Scholars focused their research on gender
inequality and feminist theory (Miller & Thompson, 1988; Williams 2005). Williams (2005) explained, feminist theory is based on traditional theories, like traits and skills theory. Basing feminist theory on traditional theories is problematic for feminists because gendered female characteristics, like being “maternal” is a sign of weakness when it is centered on a male model (Miller & Thompson, 1988). There is a continual problem with feminist theory when it is based on a male model. Shakeshaft (1981), one of the leading scholars in feminist theory in educational leadership, pointed out the problem of the male model. Shakeshaft suggested the institution of academia was based on a male model and that the research process was male oriented. She concluded that the research institution should be used for social change. In order to work towards social change, we need to allow for equal space for all participants within higher education.

The feminist lens offers perspective about how the institution of academia is a patriarchal institution. Women’s needs are trivialized and underrepresented as they are often taken advantage of and expected to maintain gendered expectations (Corey, 2009). Further, since leadership styles, research styles, and the system of advancement are all centered on male models, a feminist perspective is needed in order to interrogate those notions and challenge the status quo.

One author who used feminist theory to work towards empowering others in education was Christianakis (2008). She used feminist theory to “help conceptualize education using a different paradigm, one that includes marginalized voices, in the construction of knowledge” (p. 100). In her analysis, female teachers and academics worked in relation to a patriarchy governing higher education. She noted teachers have a
right to challenge such hierarchy. Christianakis stated, “Teachers must write about
themselves and bring teachers to educational research with the hope that research on
teaching will change if teachers write from their experience” (p. 105). It is the hope of
this study to have women write and talk from their experience using a feminist
perspective.

Additionally, since the study was situated in the context of the historical third-
wave feminist movement, it was significant to also give voice to women from all
different backgrounds including different races, classes, and nationalities (Collins, 1990;
Miller, Fialkoff, Hoffert & Thompson, 1988). In “Black Women and Feminism” bell
hooks (1981) defined feminism:

To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement
to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to
eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates the Western culture on
various levels—sex, race, and class to name a few—and a commitment to
reorganizing US society so that the self development of people can take
precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desires. (p. 507)

Bell hook’s definition of feminism helps define the theoretical framework by
showing the importance of allowing a space for all women to relay their narratives.

The importance of embracing and celebrating difference was one area that was
fundamental for a feminist perspective for women of color. Lorde (1984) stressed,
“Community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that
these differences do not exist” (p. 99). Rather, difference is a “crucial strength”
(Anzaldua & Moraga, 1981, p.100) that women of color embrace when their lives and their relationships with other women are examined.

Collins (1990) offered a definition of “Othering” that is important in a feminist theoretical framework. “Othering,” as described in Black feminist thought, is the outcome when people are objectified and viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled (p. 69). Christianakis also suggested the standpoint of those oppressed is embedded in a context characterized by domination.

For women, there is a history of objectification that must be combated through a feminist lens that also has critical and postcolonial influences. In addition to all women, for example, it is important to see how women of color, which are new mothers, also enact discourse as they live within and outside of the “Other” (Jones, 1997). Researchers must understand Homi Bhaba’s (1990; 1994) “imagined communities” of the “in-between spaces” between “us” and “them.” Moss (2003) further elaborated on this ideology. She suggested hybridity was, “The joining of two entities to create a third identity. Such hybridity, in cultural terms, is neither an appropriation of one’s culture by another, nor the acculturation of one another. Instead it is a third element produced by the interaction of culture, communities and individuals” (p. 12).

From the feminist perspective, it is increasingly important to look at feminist research in relation to power. In Carillo’s (2008) research she suggested, “If academic feminists are to build alliances designed to redistribute power, we must reckon with the power component of the lines of contact we build with others”. She continued, “We inherit this legacy of centuries of colonial expansion” (p. 2). The element of colonial
expansion will further be intertwined into the analysis with the incorporation of postcolonial theory. Although power is entwined in feminist theory, it is also important to note the critical framework, which is at the root of the power differences within the feminist scholarship.

**Critical Theory**

A critical feminist lens is significant in studying women who are trying to balance motherhood and a professional career because we, as scholars, need to interrogate the present culture. We do not need to still measure our relationship to the men in power but need to embrace and understand our relationships to other women up and down the scale. Since its conception in 1920, critical theory has been used in various theoretical frameworks, like feminism to challenge the status quo and to work towards changing the system.

A critical, feminist perspective enables the researcher to discover and explore those connections. Bensimon and Marshall (1997) and Bloom (1998) discussed the significance of a critical feminist framework in order to give voice to the invisible majority.

**Postcolonial Theory**

Furthermore, by weaving in a postcolonial theoretical perspective to the feminist perspective, the framework welcomes voices from all women, while also giving nod to our long history of discrimination in the United States. A postcolonial lens, within
feminist theory, is important to show how women who are new mothers and who are faculty members (either full-time or contingent) enact certain discourses within the patriarchal institution. It is imperative to show how the patriarchal system has kept women oppressed within higher education.

The postcolonial element of feminist theory is particularly important for third research study because it will center on new mothers who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions in the southeast US. In the southeast US, there has been a heavy influence of the Caribbean colonization of slaves (Harris, 1993). Since this was a culture that made African males, females and children a commodity, this objectification of those other than White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant (males) extended to women. Cultural residuals from that attitude remain today. Hickling-Hudson (2006) discussed how higher education is still a place of colonization. The author argued that post-colonialism has a “pedagogical dimension because educators need to end dehumanization and objectification and teach it to later generations” (p. 201). Educators need to be mindful of our history and our history of oppression.

By looking at women who are new mothers and who also work within the institution, through this framework, the study offers voice to women who have otherwise been silenced. By highlighting the oppressive nature of the institution, through various venues, the study can show how to hopefully work towards change.
Significance of the Study and Future Methodology

An analysis of new mothers who are contingent faculty members at four-year institutions is a study that warrants critical examination within the context of the literature review. There is a gap in the research that was filled through this descriptive study. To give women voice and to work towards dismantling the status quo, the study used narrative inquiry, which will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Unlike many past methodologies where the researcher was supposed to be separate from the research, this type of methodology inserts the “I” into the story. By using this form of qualitative research, I can add my own voice and perspective to the data analysis since I too am a mother and contingent faculty member at a four-year institution.

We, as mothers, are a part of a larger community. Community is also a very important element of narrative inquiry. As Chang (2008) explained, “The attention to community is another contribution of postmodernism to the scholarship of self” (p. 24). He continued, “The possibility of cultural self analysis rests on an understanding that self is part of a cultural community” (Chang, 2008, p. 26). The self cannot exist alone in the context of culture.

It is important to see how all of our experiences speak together to unite us. Narrative inquiry enabled me move away from positioning myself around a male centered model and work towards acknowledging my connection to the women around me. I was able to help women use their narratives to give voice to their experiences and to work towards meeting their needs within higher education.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter elaborates why narrative inquiry was used in this research study. The chapter begins with a description of the research methodology and the research paradigms. Following a discussion of the methodology, this section discusses the sample selection. The chapter highlights the interview protocol and explains the procedures for data analysis. I then discuss my role as the researcher and the assumptions I brought to the research process. I highlighted the importance of validity and reliability within the qualitative research study. Finally, the chapter ends with conclusions and a brief discussion of the pilot study conducted in the fall of 2010.

Study Design and Research Paradigm

Unlike other study designs that use narratives as a method within the methodology, narrative inquiry focuses on the phenomenon of “the study of experience as story” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). Narrative inquirers help construct meaning through the process of storytelling. By using this methodology, I was able to “bridge the rift between my theory and practice within my life and work” (Costandi, 2010, p. 86) and offer readers a “vicarious experience” (Polkinghorn, 2010, p. 396) through the narrative.

Storytelling is a technique that is often used in human interaction to remember events of the past and to enable people to find connections with one another. It is a “form
of knowing that is transmitted culturally” (Kramp, 2004, p. 106). As Kramp (2004) noted, “Stories preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us with our past and present and assist us to envision our future” (p. 107). Kramp’s analysis echoed Witherell and Noddings’s (1991) sentiments, “The stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture…they contribute both to our knowing and our being known” (p. 7).

In this analysis, I was able to listen to the participants’ stories about being mothers and contingent faculty members while also giving these women a place to express themselves through the exchange. Although I used the participants’ voices in the study design, I did not want to interpret their lives and their stories. The participants were the storytellers. By looking at the transcripts of the stories told, I could then look for various themes and metaphors to emerge. I was able to listen to the story, but then was able to literally tell it back and use it through the narratives.

In addition to the importance of the actual story, the metaphors that emerged out of the transcripts also helped validate the research methodology (Costandi, 2010; Kramp, 2004). In Kramp’s (2004) analysis, she showed how both the story and the metaphors that emerge are important to this methodology. In the beginning of the chapter she said story, “structures experience and gives it meaning” (p. 103). Kramp’s interpretation of themes and of metaphors is also of note. In order to categorize the stories, researchers often look for common themes embedded. Following organization of the themes, metaphors arose to describe the themes. Kramp (2004) explained, “metaphors frequently serve as organizing images for description or oneself and one’s experiences” (p. 118). Kramp highlighted that
the metaphor is used as a centrality of life and language. Themes became implicit through the metaphors.

Narrative inquiry is an alternative form of qualitative writing that provides an opportunity for in-depth exploration of experiences (Creswell, 2009). Narrative inquirers break the boundaries of traditional research designs in order to highlight new modes of scholarly research. For instance, like feminist writers, narrative inquirers advocate starting research from one’s own experiences (Baker, 2001; Cozart, 2010; Reimer, 1977). In this way, research becomes a path to discovery (Miriam, 2008). In a written discussion between Ellis and Bochner (1996), Bochner explained, “Our main problem is how to reach people who are looking for alternatives, who want to write differently, and who see an opportunity to expand the boundaries of ethnographic research” (p.16). Using this approach, I became enmeshed in the data, giving the research a unique perspective.

One aspect of narrative inquiry is its use in multiple academic disciplines like anthropology, psychology and women’s studies. For instance, narrative inquiry is based on the concept of narratology, which has been used in the humanities. Although relatively new to educational research, narrative inquiry has been used in a variety of academic disciplines (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). As narrative inquiry enters the arena of educational research, practitioners can use the methodology in a multidisciplinary approach in order to expand research.

In addition to suggestions about how to enhance the credibility of narrative inquiry, researchers must also beware of the warnings embedded within this methodology. For instance, in Juzwik’s (2010) commentary on Xu and Connelly’s article
“Narrative inquiry for school based research (2010)” Juzwik suggested that stories are not always positive. Researchers must remember stories can be “troubling, disturbing, or harmful” (p. 376). In fact, retelling stories can reenact suffering for the participant all over again. Additionally, stories can be “the destructive half of the creative dialect” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 61). As researchers begin to use narrative inquiry to examine the stories of the lived experience of participants, we must be mindful of how the research might affect them and how the narratives affect us.

As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) warned, researchers who choose to use narrative inquiry must be mindful of its infancy as a research tool. Since narrative inquiry is fairly new, there are not rigid guidelines for researchers to follow, such as a lack of agreement on the criteria of quality. Researchers must strive to make their research mindful of what the inquiry is contributing as a qualitative choice among other options from many disciplines applicable to Educational Leadership.

Another limitation the researcher must be aware of is that the term narrative is used in a variety of studies. Although narrative inquiry is like ethnography because of its emphasis on social surroundings and like phenomenology because of its emphasis on the story, it is its own research methodology that needs to be recognized for its unique components.

One important element of narrative inquiry is the presence of three specific commonplaces within the field, (a) temporality, (b) sociality, and (c) place. Temporality is the relationship of the study to time. Sociality is the tendency to socialize with others and to form social groups. Place is where the narrative occurs. All three commonplaces
Researchers simultaneously examine all three dimensions of the space as they either tell or live the stories. Temporality in narrative inquiry is important because the researcher acknowledges the importance of past, present, and future within the space; in narrative inquiry, the study is not independent of time. Researchers must be mindful of the experience within a particular moment, but must also understand how factors of the past and future also affect the experience.

Unlike other methodologies that examine personal conditions and social conditions independently, narrative inquirers examine both simultaneously. One important aspect of this condition is that narrative inquirers acknowledge their positionality within the research. The researcher becomes part of the story. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explained, “Inquirers are always in an inquiry relationship with participants’ lives. We cannot subtract ourselves from the relationship” (p. 480). Unlike many past methodologies where the researcher was supposed to be separate from the research, this new type of methodology inserts the “I” into the story. This aspect of narrative inquiry is particularly important within the research study because I included my own perspectives as a mother with children under the age of two who is also a contingent faculty member at a four-year institution.

Finally, the third dimension of the inquiry space is the physical place or sequence of places where the story is either told or lived. The impact of each place on the story is also important as well as the other commonplaces within the space (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Locale is important to the study because all of the mothers are
contingent faculty members at four-year institutions. Our experiences are unique because of the setting we work in.

To design a narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) highlighted seven considerations that are important to the methodology. The seven considerations are: (a) imagining a life space; (b) living and telling as starting points for collecting field texts; (c) defining and balancing the commonplaces; (e) investment of the self in the inquiry; (f) research-participant relationship; (g) duration of study; and (h) relationship ethics in narrative inquiry. Although many of the considerations are similar to those used in other studies, these elements are critical for the researcher who chooses to use narrative inquiry. For instance, I, as the researcher, must be self-consciously aware of everything around me and examine all of the commonplaces within the space. I must also be self-conscious of my positionality within the research. Because of the intimacy of the inquiry process, I must also be very aware of relationship ethics. Therefore, while many of the considerations are similar to other research designs, the intimacy of the methodology requires researchers, like myself, to be aware of my surroundings and how I impact the study.

Chang (2008) suggested, “Post-modern ethnography rejects the concept of objective truth. Rather, writing…is a cultural construction” (p. 141). Since narrative inquiry rejects a positivistic epistemological assumption, it is important to note the significance of constructivism within the research. It is important to lie out the epistemological assumptions of the research design and make them public (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006).
One aspect of narrative inquiry that is particularly important, specifically within constructivism, is this concept of objective truth. Whether or not there is an objective truth is, according to Riessman (2008), “a debate with long taproots in philosophy” (p. 184). Polkinghorn (2010) also argued that researchers need to move away from objective truth, or the basis in theoretical knowledge. Researchers need to be able to think narratively in order to more aptly express human thinking other than pragmatic thinking.

For narrative inquirers, there are many situated truths. Since narrated truths are always partial, they are incomplete (Riessman, 2008). The narratives are co-constructed by the participant and the researcher; “the researcher does not stand outside the transcript, neutral” (p. 31). While the researcher does not know the experiences of the participant, he or she works to portray the stories as accurately as possible. The researcher, according to Riessman (2008), must “focus on the broad contours of narratives—the scaffolding” (p. 73).

Truths are still important in the narrative inquiry, even if they are not objective. It is important that the reader feel that the stories are true. Whether or not the truths are objective or subjective, the reader must find the stories of the participants believable and, therefore, “true.” By allowing the readers to move back and forth between their world and the world of the story, they have to continually reevaluate the story to see if they, in fact, find it to be true. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2000), “The story invites the reader to alienate herself from the events described, to enter into the mental state of the teller, whose view is different from the reader’s own” (p. 69).
In this study, I used an interpretivist type of research design that was informed by my underlying constructivist epistemology (Crotty, 1998). Epistemology is personal and is embedded in experience (Costandi, 2010). In a constructivist epistemology, there are certain basic assumptions including: meanings are constructed by humans as they engage in the world around them; humans make sense of the world based on social and historical perspectives; and meaning is always social, based on interaction.

All of narrative inquiry is based on interpretation and the social construction of reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 61). Meanings are created through interaction. It is important how people react over time in specific social settings. As Chang (2008) said, “Situated shared constructs and meanings are located in or affected by the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, age, gender, and other contextual characteristics of those who espouse them” (p. 49). We, as researchers, must be aware of how our social settings are affected by the way the world is socially constructed around us.

In a constructivist epistemology, and within narrative inquiry, the researcher relies heavily on the participant’s views and perceptions. Additionally, constructivists acknowledge how their own backgrounds shape their interpretations and understand how they position themselves within the research. Finally, since constructivists try to make meaning of the world around them, narrative inquiry fits nicely into the epistemology as the inquiry shapes the narrative through either the telling or the living of the story. (Crotty, 1998)

Narrative inquiry focuses on a culture or subculture. The emphasis is on the encounter between the narrator and the group being studied. Authors use their life story
in that culture to look more deeply at self-other interactions (Ellis, 2004). According to Ellis and Bochner (1996), “We use narrative to make sense of our lives” (p. 33). By making sense of our own lives, we as narrative inquirers can also make sense of the culture or subculture we are encircled by.

Further, in this case the subculture being studied is new mothers who are also contingent faculty members. According to Minister (1991), “women search for and collaboratively construct both personal and female cultural identity” (p. 34). Since women’s system of communication is often through language, narrative inquiry allows the women to tell their stories while it allows the researcher to focus on the interactions of this particular group of women (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Etter-Lewis, 1991; Minister, 1991).

From the social interactions, narrative inquiry allows for a shared experience that can allow for critical change. As Chang (2008) noted, “The consensus that results from interactions in the research site can produce a deep sense of shared understanding of a particular social problem as well as a set of shared norms that leads to specific directions for action” (51). By allowing the researcher to understand the constructed worldview of the participants, greater understanding can emerge from the research.

For narrative inquirers, researchers do not want the readers to be passive, rather, they want readers “to feel and care and desire” (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p. 24). In addition to acknowledging the social construction of our reality, there is a strong critical paradigm influence in the research design. In a critical perspective narrative inquirers “believe institutions can be transformed, and they seek ways of using research to serve the
transformation process” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 46). In this way, narrative inquiry thinks about change. The research design is very empowering for both the researcher and the reader.

Counter narratives allow for interconnections with other women and thus the narratives also allow for multiple layers of analysis. For instance, Etter-Lewis (1991) argued, “oral narratives allow for the rediscovery of womanhood” (p. 43). The narratives allow for a “multiplicity of experience and worldviews” (Etter-Lewis, 1991, p. 56). While the women’s stories often overlap, and they share similar themes and metaphors that can be analyzed and celebrated, the stories also let the women reclaim their own identities, an important aspect of counter narratives. One way the women reclaim themselves, is that the stories allow them to shine as individuals, rather than just women with a collective, similar experience.

Counter narratives allow women to share their individual experiences, rather than just share their experiences as part of a collective group identity. Counter narratives allow women to break away from the “mythical male norm” (Etter-Lewis, 1991, p. 43). The mythical male norm presupposes that the single male voice of an experience represents the voice of others. In other words, there is a master narrative that all other stories are judged against (Riessman, 2008). In the master narrative, the male collective voice is the center of the universe. If the voice in the story is in anyway different, than the story is deviant or deficient. Since the women’s collective experiences as new mothers who are contingent faculty members and their individual narratives are different than their male counterpart’s experiences, then they cannot live up to the male peer’s expectations.
Narrative inquiries can be powerful ways to challenge the status quo by presenting a counter narrative since “stories can shatter complacency and challenge the status quo” (Delgado & Stafancic, 2000, p. 61). Readers have a different perspective of a story other than the storytellers. As, Delgado and Stefancic argued (2008), “the oppositional nature of the story, the manner which it challenges and rebuffs the stock story, thus causes her to oscillate between poles” (p. 69). The participant’s reevaluation of the story, of what it is like to be a contingent faculty member with young children, allows her to find her own subjective truths about the narrative.

There are many benefits of narrative research. By using stories to weave together experiences, the research design offers connections. Further, narrative inquiry illuminates what new directions the research can take (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). Additionally, according to Chang (2008) narrative inquiry, “1. Offers a research friendly method to researchers and readers; 2. It enhances cultural understanding of self and others; 3. It has a potential to transform the self and others to motivate them to work toward cross-cultural coalition building” (p. 52).

**Research Questions**

The following descriptive questions guided the research design.

- How do mothers who are also contingent faculty members, make meaning of the complexity of the interlocking spheres of home, work and self?
- What is the motivation and what do we hope to achieve within our combined personal and professional lives?
• How will our narratives show how we live our experiences within the academe?

• How are our narratives a representation and critique of the present culture?

Sample Selection

The sample selection for this narrative exploration began with self-exploration. To understand the community of mothers, with children under the age of six who are contingent faculty members, I used my own experiences and perspectives. I currently have a daughter who is under the age of three. Additionally, I also work part-time as a contingent faculty member at two four-year colleges located near my home.

In addition to using self-collection data, I also conducted a critical sampling in order to gain additional participants for the study. I contacted department chairs, at four-year institutions within a 50-mile radius of my academic institution in North Carolina and looked on department websites to see if there were any blurbs about their contingent faculty. Following suggestions from the department chairs, I created an email to the individual potential participants outlining the goals of the study and asking for their participation. In addition to contacting department chairs, I also attended faculty senate meetings at a few institutions within the 50-mile radius of my home. I also placed fliers at some of the preschools located near the college campuses.

In order to find participants, I also contacted the human resources department of various institutions within the 50-mile radius. I felt that the department could serve as a gatekeeper to protect confidentiality. I sent a letter of invitation to each college that the
human resource department could then send to potential participants. This way, I would have no idea who I was contacting. Although I worked with numerous human resource departments, I did not obtain any participants through this strategy.

Furthermore, I also used networking to contact potential participants. I contacted former Clemson University students who worked at local intuitions. I also used contacts from fellow students and peers who had friends who fit the participant selection process and who may have wanted to be involved in the interview process.

The goal was to have between three and five participants. Since this was a qualitative methodology that relies heavily on relationships, a limited number of participants were required so that an adequate, more in-depth and personal level of communication developed with each participant. I ended up with a total of five participants. For a description of the participants, see Appendix G. Following completion of gaining participants, I used the initial interview as an opportunity for the participant to decline the study and for me to discover if the participant was willing to participate.

**Interview Protocol**

Interview is the primary tool used within narrative inquiry, particularly within the living inquiry. For the interviews I conducted with participants, I followed a respected standard in interview techniques. As Patton (2002) suggested, I used an “interview guide” to structure the interview questions that were “properly sequenced” and “clear” (pp. 341-361). However, I also allowed the interviews to focus on the interaction, not just on information gathering (Anderson & Jack, 1991). I also audio recorded the interviews on a
password-protected laptop. I maintained confidentiality of the participants by changing their names and any location descriptors. It was my hope that the interview protocol allowed me to suggest “questions that offer the persons being interviewed the opportunity to respond in their own words and to express their own personal perspectives” (Patton, 2002, p. 348). Although interviewing implies interactive, face-to-face verbal interchange, other aspects were employed. However, the majority of the interviews with each participant were face-to-face.

The interview protocol followed techniques of both semi-structured and interactive interviewing. Because of the limitations of motherhood, the distance of the participants, and their busy work schedules, I maintained email and phone contact with the participants over the course of the semester. For instance, I corresponded with Pam fourteen times during the semester and Jenny twenty times; the correspondence amount with the other participants was similar. After establishing a strong relationship with each of the participants, I conducted a face-to-face interview that lasted a minimum of two hours. It was important to establish a close relationship with each participant before the interview so that the face-to-face interview time could be a narrative rich in data. Additionally, I held a one-hour interview session with each participant in order for her to verify and approve the interview transcriptions.

The place and time of the interviews was also important in the study. Ellis (2004) stressed, “Since the account the interviewee gives is socially constructed in a particular place and time, for a particular hearer, for a particular purpose, under particular conditions, the interviewer is always a vital part of the narrative” (p. 61). The
interviewees and myself worked towards a more reflexive, dyadic interview that lessened the power hierarchies. The interview guides are listed at the end of the dissertation as Appendices B, C and D. Since the formal interview occurred over one lengthy discussion, I structured the interview to move throughout the three broad categories of interview questions. I used elements of semi-structured and interactive interviewing techniques in order to work towards making the interviews focused yet free of power restraints.

In semi-structured interviews techniques the lead questions are broader. The questions then funnel down to more specific questions. Chang (2008) stated, “Interview questions often begin with grand tour questions in casual conversation settings and progress to mini tour questions seeking detailed and more focused information” (p. 105). The grand tour questions are usually open and descriptive while mini tour questions are more focused (Chang, 2008). Some of the grand tour questions for the interview meetings included: How does your academic background and academic goals reflect your present position at this institution? We talked a little bit about the support you receive from home. What type of support do you receive from your academic institution and do you feel it is adequate or inadequate? Finally, In what ways do you think we are treated differently because we are adjunct faculty members, women and mothers? In what ways do you think we are treated differently on all intersecting levels? The grand tour questions allowed the interviews to flow organically in order to allow the participant to use her voice to tell the story she wanted me to hear.

Additionally, in interactive interviewing, the researcher becomes a part of the interview process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As Minister (1991) suggested, “by listening
to the narrator, we are able to listen to ourselves” (p. 24). Further, since sharing one’s own story lessens the hierarchy of power, it was my hope that my involvement in the interview process allowed the participants to have a space where they could not only openly share their feelings, but where we could work together to help one another in an open and supportive environment (Ellis et. al, 2011).

I also used interview techniques that allowed for a counter narrative. According to Anderson and Jack (1991), I had to shed my own agenda in order to hear the particular stories of the participants. Further, I tried to listen for meaning within the interviews as opposed to trying to insert my own opinions about the meanings of the story. I also tried to use a more feminist form of interview process. As Minister (1991) suggested, I aimed to voice positive vocal responses during the interview. Also, since women may not like to speak because they are more assigned to private spheres, as Minister suggested, I used other forms of nonverbal communication in order to get a fuller picture of their narratives.

I used many forms of data collection for this research design. For instance, I used field notes, journals, self-observation data, and artifacts such as personal letters. According to Chang (2008), “Textual artifacts are material manifestations of culture that illuminate their historical contexts” (p.107).

Field-notes were a very important aspect to qualitative methodology that allowed me to keep data. Although the notes started out unstructured, they began to take shape and allowed me to see the direction of the analysis as the data collection continued. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) ascertained:
Field notes are organized around those basic conceptual frames or questions that structured the study in the first place; they become increasingly focused and preceded as the research itself progresses and hones in on those features of the cultural scene that becomes most interesting and as the formative theoretical model emerges. (p. 18)

Chang (2008) also noted that the meta-cognitive activity of field journaling, which is different than field notes because the researcher’s perspective, “can provide purposeful and healthy interruptions during fieldwork to help you [the researcher] move into and out of the self-reflective state” (p. 96).

In addition to the reflective journal that was used in conjunction with field-notes, the participants and I each maintained a personal reflective journal that was used during data analysis. Self-observation data, which was collected in all areas of research, served as a form of data in this study (Chang, 2008). My personal journal was particularly important because the journal offered space where I could present my own narrative. Through the journals I was able to decide what to include and what not to include during the interview process. I created an autobiographical timeline that situated the interview questions in a specific time and place (Chang, 2008).

Participants were asked to keep the journal from the beginning of the interview time period to the completion of the transcript collection. In some cases, narrative cycles were used. In a narrative cycle, the participant and myself write our own stories. Participants then wrote a response and gave the narratives back commenting on how the narratives made them feel and where we identified with the stories. As Pinnegan, et. al
(2005) commented, the narrative cycles, “hold promise for articulating the personal experience of teacher-mothers and for adding to what is known to the teacher knowledge” (p. 58).

The data was routinely organized to help me work towards future data analysis. As Chang (2008) noted periodical organization of the data steers the subsequent collection process effectively toward the research goal. Through organization of the data, I looked for saturation of the data and on what concepts or commonplaces the saturation occurred. I could also look for deficiency, redundancy and irrelevancy. The data was categorized later, during the analysis section of the research process, through the use of coding techniques (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004).

Following organization of the data, the information was routinely interpreted and categorized during the data collection process. Interpretation involved “making sense of the data” (Creswell, 1998, p. 144). Through data interpretation, I focused on finding cultural meanings beyond the data. I questioned as Wolcott (1994) so eloquently asked, “What is to be made of it all” (p. 12)?

I used the following strategies to ensure proper interview protocol development during the research study:

1. Searched for recurring topics, themes and patterns; 2. Looked for cultural themes; 3. Identified exceptional occurrences; 4. Analyzed inclusion and omission; 5. Connected the present with the past; 6. Analyzed relationships between self and others; 7. Compared with other people’s cases; 8.
Conceptualized broadly; 9. Compared with social science constructs and ideas; and 10. Framed with theories. (Chang, 2008, p.131)

I used the interview protocol to allow the information to begin to be analyzed. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated, “The process of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation are neither terminal nor mechanical. They are always emergent, unpredictable and unfinished” (p. 479). In order to use a feminist model of research (Minister, 1991) and to use strategies of counter narratives, I also shared and critiqued the interviews with the participants (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 23). Although there was a blurred line between data collection and data analysis, having strong interview protocols helped the transition to data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of taking the information derived in data collection and determining patterns, relationships and themes from the information. Wolcott (1994) noted, “It is an activity directed to the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them” (p. 12). In this process, the researcher used various techniques to take the organized information and discover connections. For narrative inquiry, in particular, “Thematic analysis of the narrative is treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illustrate the content and hold within or across stories” (Ellis, 2004, p.196).

There were many steps in the process of data analysis. For instance, after the data was organized, it had to be classified. One way researchers go through data to determine
a theme is to label the information. After the information has been put into loose
categories, it can then be classified. According to Chang (2008), “The 4-W step, who,
when, where, what, criteria becomes helpful in this step” (p. 118). Next, the data must be
coded. Coding techniques allowed the data to be more fully placed into distinct categories
(Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). After the data is coded, it must be refined (Corbin & Strauss, 2009;
Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). In other words, the researcher must determine what sources and
information are relevant to the data and what information is arbitrary. Since I transcribed
the interviews, I was enmeshed in the data, which further strengthened my credibility and
ability to determine what data was of note. Furthermore, following transcription and
coding of the analysis, I sought the help of a third party reviewer. During a face-to-face
meeting, I gave the reviewer, and qualitative expert, clean copies of my transcripts. The
qualitative expert then categorized the data independently. Following her coding, we
came together to compare data analysis and discuss further coding strategies.

The analysis of data was a process that was not a clear, straightforward process.
Data analysis occurred in all stages of the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2009). As
Ellis (2004) explained, “Analysis and interpretation require the researcher’s holistic
insight, a creative mixing of multiple approaches and patience with uncertainty” (p. 126).
There are some steps that helped the researcher discover commonality amongst the data.
For instance, since I, as the researcher, paid attention to my own perspective, and listened
to the voices of my participants, the themes emerged out of the data (Clandinin &
Connelly, 1994; Huber, Clandinin & Huber, 2006).
According to Creswell (1998), the three I’s of insight, intuition and impression influence the ethnographic process. Insight had a great deal to do with the process because development and reflection of self were important. Additionally, in order to gain greater perspective about the culture that surrounded us, we used insight and impression to understand how to pursue the research process and how to make connection with the community of our participants. Temporality became increasingly important as a period of time allowed for the researcher to become embedded in the life story and to then be able to tell the story to its fullest. The three I’s of insight, intuition and impression, like the seven considerations of Connelly and Clandinin (2006) influenced data analysis.

As narrative inquirers enter the data analysis stage of research, they go through a process of development of self that shapes the data. As Chang (2008) suggested, “Reconfiguration, reconstruction, or transformation of self comes through arduous self-examination. Writings bring this self-development process to light” (p. 141).

Intuition and impression also played a significant role in data analysis. For instance, the inquirer changed the ordering and spacing of time between interview questions, or redirected the interview, when I got the impression the participant was uncomfortable or that the participant was closing herself off from the interview process. In order to write as inquiry, and to record the participant’s experiences, I, as the researcher, had to use my own impressions, over time, to collect the richest data possible (Chang, 2008).

Finally, to discover connection to self and the participants in research, we must use counter practices of authority (Ellis, 2004). Since researchers hold interpretive
authority over the participants, for example, we must be aware of not only the authority we have over our participants, but also our role and our assumptions as we entered the research process.

After the researcher gathered data from either a starting point of telling or living, I needed to include three important elements in the writing of the text. First, I, as the inquirer, needed to think narratively. Second, I needed to consider textual form, depending on the stories written. Third, since the writing of the text was a narrative act, I needed to be cognizant of the fact that this particular narrative was only one way to write the story. Fourth, since the audience was so significant in this narrative inquiry, I was aware of all of the different audiences I was trying to reach. Finally, since research texts were constructed, the importance of fluid inquiry needed to be addressed. I had to be specific about the inquiry’s social significance and how they contributed to the larger body of knowledge.

**Researcher’s Role and Assumptions**

I conducted a narrative inquiry about the lived experience of mothers with children under the age of six, who are also contingent faculty members. I wanted to see how we navigate the spheres of home, work and self that constantly divide our time. Because I, too, am embedded within the research, my role and assumptions played a significant factor in the research process. For example, since my role was to create a space where women could tell their stories, I had to open up and express my own vulnerabilities. I included my autoethnography in the appendices, as Appendix A. It was
important to illustrate some of my background in order to highlight my role and assumptions. After completing my autoethnography, I was able to listen to the narrator, and also listen to myself (Anderson & Jack, 1991).

**Summary of Autoethnography**

I had to be able to have intimate conversations with the women I interviewed. Before I determined what stories I would reveal and which stories I would not insert into their space, I had to be fully aware of my position and how my experiences shaped my perspectives. I am a twenty-nine year old, White, woman who has worked in academia since I graduated from my undergraduate college in May of 2004. Although I thought I was going to be a number of professions throughout my undergraduate career, I stumbled into a job at a small southern college that shaped my future career aspirations.

I worked at the small southern college for almost five years, where I also received my Masters, but I had to leave the campus when my husband was accepted into a dental residency program in North Carolina. When I moved to North Carolina I was three months pregnant. I still had the expectation I could find a job at one of the local colleges. It was during the interview process that I first realized how being a mother was going to affect my professional dreams. I realized working full-time would not best suit my lifestyle. Instead of working full-time at one of the colleges, I ended up taking two jobs as an adjunct English instructor. One of the colleges is located thirty minutes north of my home, while the other college is located an hour to the south. I made $1800.00 per semester at each job.
Although I received a lot of criticism from friends and family for working and traveling for such little pay, I felt I needed to work to avoid gaps on my vita. Additionally, I thought the jobs would help advance my career. Even though I had good connections with the department chairs at both schools, and they both were aware of the pregnancy, I felt my drive to work hard and earn respect was overshadowed when I developed a high-risk pregnancy. When I became pregnant I was an “ideal” pregnancy candidate; the doctors assumed the pregnancy would go smoothly. However, when I went to my 20th week appointment the doctors became concerned. Although the rest of the pregnancy and trying to work during this stressful time is a story that needs to be told, the narrative will come within the authoethnography (see Appendix A). For now, the main point was that I became high-risk while I was also hard-working. Even though I took the teaching positions under the assumption I would deliver my baby after the final exams, I had my daughter, Harper, halfway through the semester.

After Harper’s delivery, I tried to finish out my semester’s expectations while having a sick, pre-term, four-pound baby at home. I felt I had failed in academia and that there was not space for me. However, throughout this time, I was also working on my PhD. I struggled a great deal with my future plans. I knew that, at least for a while, being a contingent faculty was the only possible career choice.

Two years later, I sit here writing with a four week old baby boy perched atop my chest. Although I have continued to work as a contingent faculty member, I have also chosen to expand my family. Harper is now two and a half and Beckett was born on June 27th. I plan on graduating the PhD program in December. Although I still do not know
exactly what my future plans will be, I know that I will strive to effectively navigate the spheres of home, work and self as I graduate with the PhD and enter the workforce, with now two young children at home.

Even though the women I interviewed might have different stories, it is still important to see how my role was influenced by my experiences. My story was woven with theirs in order to illuminate how we navigated our divided worlds. I did not want the “I” to overshadow the other stories, and had to determine which parts of my narrative to reveal and not to reveal. I had to be able to find connection with the participants in order to develop close relationships.

It is essential to stress the significance of placing the “I” within the methodology. Unlike other qualitative methodologies that do not want the researcher’s voice to come across in the writing, narrative inquiry consciously chooses to do so. Ellis declared, “We’ve left traces of our convictions all over the text. Instead of masking our presence, leaving it at the margins, we should make ourselves more personally accountable for our perspective” (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p. 15). Narrative inquirers, like myself, celebrate our position within the study.

Inserting the researcher into the research has many positive benefits. For instance, as Maguire (2006) asserted, “The conscious positioning of authors within their texts opens up possibilities for evocative, innovative ways in which researchers may represent realities, themselves, and their research participants in their texts” (p.1). Therefore, unlike other methodologies that discredit the author’s voice, narrative inquiry allowed me to use reflection to make additional critiques of the culture within the study.
There are some assumptions researchers must pay close attention to within the research; we have to make ourselves “more personally accountable for our perspective” (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p. 15). For instance, since culture is socially constructed, we must understand our own perspectives as we enter a relationship with our participants. For instance LeCompte & Schensul (1999) remind researchers they need to be aware of their own ethnocentrism and kinds of preconceptions and unconscious biases they bring to the field in the form of their age, gender, ethnicity, physical size, social class, religious and cultural backgrounds, educational level, and personal style. Researchers also need to be aware of fluid and ever-changing subjectivity (Lather, 1991).

In addition to the researcher’s preconceived notions before they enter the interview process, there are other constructivist areas of concern that must be noted. For example, interviews are also socially constructed (Chang, 2008). Since the account the interviewee gives is socially constructed, and how researchers perceive the answers is also, socially constructed, researchers must do their best as researchers to limit the hierarchies (Carillo, 2008). Researchers must give the most valid accounts possible, paying particular attention to their roles and own assumptions.

**Quality in Narrative Inquiry**

There were many strategies I used during the research process in order to strive for quality within the narrative inquiry. For example, LeCompte and Schensul (1999) defined validity and reliability in the following ways. They stated, “Reliability refers to replicability of research results over time, different sites and populations, and with
different researchers” (p. 271). They continued, “Validity is the degree to which researchers actually discovered what they think their results show, and how applicable the results are to other populations” (p. 272). In narrative inquiry, validity and reliability are important because of the standards of credibility within qualitative research are different than quantitative research.

Narrative inquiry, however, diverges from the standard canon of validity and reliability. In narrative inquiry, the deviation from the positivistic, scientific approach is apparent. For instance, narrative inquiry breaks away from standards because the researcher is the instrument for participant observation, the researcher is part of the research, and strict laboratory controls cannot be imposed (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Furthermore, since inquirers acknowledge the world is socially constructed, and that interviews take place in a particular time and setting, results will not be the same between two narrative inquiries. However, there are criterion narrative inquirers need to acknowledge in order to make qualitative studies as valid and reliable as possible.

In narrative inquiry, both the perspective of the researcher and the participants are critically important; the reader’s reaction to the narrative plays a significant role. Ellis et al (2011) explained, “Reliability refers to narrative credibility, validity, about whether the story could be true” (p. 10). They continued, “Generalizability moves from respondent to readers, always tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them and their experience or about the lives of others they know” (p. 10). For narrative inquirers, the research is tested by whether or not, among other things, the narrative has an emotional, believable impact on the readers.
There are pitfalls in narrative research the researcher. Some pitfalls the researcher must be aware of include:

1. Excessive focus on self in isolation from others; 2. Overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; 3. Exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; 4. Negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives and 5. Inappropriate application of the label. (Chang, 2008, p. 54)

To raise narrative inquiry to its own standards, researchers must be aware of these areas.

In narrative inquiry, the relationships the researcher develops with participants can cause the most threat to the validity and reliability of the study. As Ellis et. al (2011) stated, “Participants often begin as or become friends through the research process” (p. 9). In this study, I only knew one of the participants before the interview process. While I did form a connection with the other women through the interview process, I tried to maintain a professional relationship through the meetings by using various techniques, such as utilizing the interview protocols.

Although relational concerns could cause ethical dilemmas, for example I shared some of the same work experiences with the participant who is a previous friend and colleague, the connection between the inquirer and the participant can also add positive benefits. For instance, by having additional interviews for member-checks (Janesick, 2000; Merriam, 2009), the participants hopefully felt more comfortable approving or adding to details from the transcript.
According to Denzin (1997), an important criterion of a work is whether the research has the possibility to change the world and make it a better place. Since the personal is political, narrative inquirers insert themselves into the research in order to gain perspective about themselves and those around them. Researchers attempt to give voice to the lived experience. These criterion are alone scholarly and noteworthy.

There are other aspects of narrative inquiry, which make the research study credible. For instance, according to Richardson (1990), the study must show substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact and lived experience. In this way, there is a scholarly rubric and criterion for good scholarship. In order to have a strong qualitative study, researchers must add as much detail as possible in order to give the readers the ability to see what is being argued. Additionally, researchers, like myself, must keep a balance between description, analysis and interpretation.

One way I held the narrative inquiry to high standards of qualitative research was through the use of a personal journal (Merriam, 2009). In the journal I was able to write my own narrative. I was also able to make reflections about the interviews and any other personal notes that were applicable to the study. I was able to determine what part of the narrative needed to be told and what should be left untold. This strategy is an important criterion in narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) stated, “Invite the researcher to write his or her narrative within the same commonplace space as the study. The researcher can then share experiences and so forth during interviews” (p. 483). By determining what to include and by having a place for personal memory, the research stands up to the tests of validity, reliability, credibility and trustworthiness.
To make the narrative inquiry stand up to the tests of qualitative research, I used trustworthiness techniques to establish rapport with the participants and to aid in interpretations of our connections. I focused on the networks that were created through the interview process. Lather (1991) noted that validity is a tangled web of ideas. The importance is focusing on the interconnection of ideas and the networks that emerge. I used Janesick’s (2000) approach to trustworthiness called crystallization. Janesick offered the idea of, “Looking at data convergence in terms of a crystal, which recognizes the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life” (p. 393). I looked for the connection with each participant and our stories in order to make the research achieve high academic standards. I also conducted member-checks with each of the participants (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). By sharing excerpts of the transcripts with each of the participants, and also using a story board when appropriate, I was be able to make sure I established trustworthiness and that I accurately interpreted the data. Additionally, by using a third-party reviewer, I was able to establish another level of credibility to the analysis.

In addition to the aforementioned protocols, I used data triangulation. Data triangulation is the ability to draw from various data sources, observations, and so forth in order to strengthen the quality of the methodology (Creswell, 2009). For instance, when the participants discussed their sentiments, I noted how the sentiments were also reflected in the literature. One example, when the women talked about how they might not have more children because of their career, I noted how the authors discussed family size in the literature review (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). In addition to interview and literature
triangulation, I also used various other strategies to strengthen the research. For example, when Amy talked about how she could not show pictures of her children in her office, I noted in my field notes I observed she did not have any pictures in her office. I used various strategies in order to show that the research was consistent.

I aimed to work with the data as much as possible until I felt data saturation was achieved (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I conducted an extensive literature review and worked with participants until I felt I had made valid conclusions about the themes and metaphors that emerged from the narrative inquiry (Maxwell, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994). By triangulating the literature, by working with participants until I achieved data saturation, and then using the help of a scholarly third-party reviewer, I upheld qualitative standards of scholarly research.

Finally, another way I upheld qualitative standards was that I made all of the steps of the process as transparent as possible (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). I explicated all of the steps in order to allow for replicability with the data. This transparency added integrity to the study so that the data could be synthesized. By being able to self-edit, and to fully understand how the narratives contributed to a larger meta-narrative, I was able to make the research scholarly and sound.

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to transcend traditional canonical rules of validity and reliability while at the same time creating new standards of excellence and quality within narrative inquiry. If researchers avoid the common pitfalls of the methodology and adhere to the proposed strict criterion of the research design, narrative inquiry can stand alone as a noteworthy, valid, and scholarly research design.
Chapter Summary

Narrative inquiry is a research design that has grown and developed in scholarly research. Although narrative inquiry is a relatively new methodology, its potential makes for a research design that has the ability to take research into new and innovative directions.

Narrative inquiry allowed me to add a new voice in the present research and open the door to creative research in the future. By making meaning through storytelling, I used life stories of experiences to show how mothers with children under six years old navigate the world of academia.

The pilot study I conducted in the fall of 2011, which will be described in more detail in Chapter 4 and my autoethnography included in Appendix A, illustrated the possibility of using narrative within the research design.
CHAPTER FOUR

PILOT STUDY

Introduction

In this analysis, I examined how new mothers, with pre-school aged babies and toddlers, who are also contingent faculty members, make meaning of the complexity of interlocking spheres of home, work and self. I studied specifically how support and success is measured within and amongst the different worlds we constantly navigate. I used autoethnography as the qualitative methodology in order to illuminate, how we, through my own narrative in addition to the stories of one of my peers, construct and live our experiences within the academe.

From the results of this study, it appears success is measured in relation to time in all three realms. Although there are moments of stress and frustration, we are also aware of our successes as we divide our time amongst the spheres. In addition to participant narratives, implications for future research are offered.

I chose this investigative study as a way to see how mothers with children under the age of six juggle their obligations while also trying to maintain a sense of autonomy within their professional lives. For instance, why do new mothers take low paying jobs as contingent faculty members that do not cover the cost of childcare all the while forcing them to be away from their children? What do these women hope to achieve from the experience? What is the motivation? Through this autoethnographic analysis, I aimed to reflect on those questions, show perspective and suggest ways to help navigate the complexity of motherhood and academia.
There are indeed many layers to the study. Specifically, the struggles for support for contingent faculty members and new mothers often do not align with the institution’s goals (Finley, 2008). The mother’s struggles represented an additional layer to how there is a lack of alignment of goals for institutions and their part-time employees, particularly in the historically patriarchal academic institution. I believe this study, as an autoethnographic exploration of the lived experiences, served as the foundation for much more scholarly work to come. By using autoethnography as a method to fully embrace my position in the research, the analysis also contributed a different perspective to a persistent challenge. I see this as a growing area of academia that deserves further scholarship; this pilot study will hopefully serve as the gateway for additional research to give voice to those of us who have often felt silenced, marginalized and simply too tired to speak up.

**Sampling Design and Recruitment**

The participant and I are currently contingent faculty members at a small, private liberal arts college in the Southeast United States. In addition to both being new mothers and faculty members at the institution, the participant and I are very similar in our backgrounds. For instance, we are both around the age of 30, middle class, White women who are married. We both received our Master’s in English from the same college and both went to public four-year universities in the South. We have both lived in the area for about the same amount of time. Additionally, we each have one daughter who is under the age of two.
In order to maintain confidentiality, the names of the participant and her family were changed. The participant chose the names for her family members. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and placed on my password protected laptop computer. Following each interview I wrote reflections about the interview in my personal journal. After completing the interviews, and collecting the participant’s reflective journal, member checks were used to verify the data (Janesick, 2000). The participants were able to look at the transcripts and add or subtract information. None of the information was removed from the transcripts. All of the participants, however, helped highlight various points of the interview they felt were the most noteworthy.

The data collection and analysis conformed to the highest standards of qualitative research. In order to collect data that warranted my research, I used many tools of the autoethnographic toolkit such as journaling, semi-structured interviews, and member-checks (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Further, by being able to include my own voice and perspective into the research, I was able to collect and code (Sipe and Ghiso, 2004) rich qualitative research in order to use it for my analysis.

During the course of the semester, the participant kept a journal that was used to analyze emergent themes. Furthermore, I used my own reflective journals as a way to show our perspective of how we navigate our world of academia, how our support and success are measured, and to give voice to our lived experiences. I also used the journals as a location to collect field and observation notes regarding our interviews and reflective thoughts.
I conducted three, two-hour interviews with the participant to collect data. The interviews were a great way to communicate with the participant and have an open discussion about our experiences in academia. The interviews followed qualitative researcher protocol where I could build a relationship, get to know the participant and put her at ease (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 103). As mentioned, following completion of the interviews, I held an additional meeting for transcript review with the participant (Janesick, 2000) to add more credibility to the analysis.

Each of the interviews allowed the participant and I to form a support group where we could discuss the overlapping spheres of our work and family life. The interviews became a cathartic process where we could have an open dialogue about both our frustrations and our celebrations—to have a place to open up about the highs and the lows we experience in our personal and professional lives.

Participants

The participant has worked at the university for four-years. During that time, she has taught various English courses and has been involved in numerous programs on the college campus. As mentioned, the participant is around the age of thirty and is White. She has been married for five years and has lived in the area for about the same amount of time. The participant received her undergraduate degree from a four-year research institution in the South. She earned her Masters in English from the same university as myself, although she graduated one year earlier. We both attended this college in another state, but within the Southeast. She has one daughter who is a year and a half.
Since this is an autoethnographic exploration, it is also important to include descriptive information about myself as well. I have worked at the university for two years. During this time, I have taught multiple sections of an introductory English course. Because of my position as a contingent faculty member, I have also worked concurrently as an English instructor at another four-year institution. I am currently twenty-nine years old and am White. I have been married for five years and have lived in the area for about two years. I received my undergraduate degree from a four-year research institution in the South. I received my Masters from the same university as the participant. I am currently a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership with a concentration in Higher Education. My daughter, Harper, is a little over a year old. As noted, the participant and I have very similar backgrounds. While our demographics create limitations for including the voice of many women, the participant and my similar experiences and backgrounds allowed for a valid pilot study.

**Data Analysis**

Evidence for this autoethnographic exploration came from the first hand accounts of myself and the other participant. The interviews were a way to depict the experience, illustrate concepts and findings, and show range of evidence (Green, Camilli & Elmore, 2006). Further, in order to understand the full story, thick descriptions were presented along with the narratives in order to give the reader a vivid description of our experiences. The thick descriptions and interview transcripts allowed a medium for telling our stories in hopes of creating change in the future. As Connelly and Clandinin
(2006) explained, “Narratives have a critical context. There is a healing function, a
guidance in the transformation of oppressors, and opens up new ways of understanding”
(p. 480). By walking the reader through some of the experiences of the interviews and
reflections, this autoethnography can not only shed light on the data but also further
illuminate our experiences in order to open them up for critical data analysis.

The three semi-structured interviews were conducted near the college campus
location during the fall of 2010. The first interview focused on “Background and Goals.”
The second interview centered on “Support and Success” and the final interview focused
on “Treatment and Future Implications.” Each interview added a rich, thick description to
our lived narratives.

From the first interview, some of the most important questions were: Do you
receive support from home for your professional choices? How does having a family
affect your short term and long-term career goals and how does your academic
background and academic goals reflect your present position at this institution? The
interview focused on the types of professional backgrounds we held and how our goals
were affected by those backgrounds and by our current position as new mothers.

From the second interview, a few of the most pivotal questions were: What type
of support do you receive from your academic institution and do you feel it is adequate or
inadequate? A great deal of this interview also centered on goal alignment. In the semi-
structured interviews I asked questions like, “How do you think your goals align with the
goals of the institution? What type of outside support do you use with your child and how
do you feel about that support? Is there any support within the institution?
Finally, in the third interview, which focused on treatment of mothers who are contingent faculty and future implications for research, we spent a great deal of time on questions such as, In what ways do you think we are treated differently because we are adjunct faculty members, women and mothers? In what ways do you think we are treated differently on all intersecting levels? By using our stories, our experiences set the stage for a rich data analysis. Additionally, in order to show the depths of our narratives vignettes, selections of the interviews, and setting imagery were used to tell the story in the greatest allowable detail.

While the setting helped set up the background for the interviews, the words reflected through our conversations and journals most accurately gave voice to the feelings of tension and fatigue that was almost palpable during the interviews.

**Findings**

After reflecting on the data entries, and using coding techniques (Sipe and Ghiso, 2004) there appeared to be major themes that were echoed in our meetings: lack of time and money; guilt; the need to compromise; the joy of simple pleasures; questioning our professional choices; juggling our responsibilities; questioning the future; feeling proud; wondering whether or not we feel justified; looking at lack and presence of support; and the need and desire for laughing. Many would argue this is how all mothers feel; perhaps this is the case, but as a community of women who walk the line between a personal and professional life, the emergent themes rose from our words and embodied the line we walk in our everyday paths.
Through analysis of the data it appeared that the participant and I constantly navigated between the spheres of home, work and self---all which are entwined as we walked between and through them. Success was measured in relation to time in all of the three realms. In fact, a sense of urgency flowed throughout the meetings and was felt in the journal entries; it appeared we were always in a battle with the clock and the lack of time. Support and success conflicts and celebrations were constantly mixed throughout the worlds we walk between.

**Home**

In the home sphere, support is measured through our family, such as with our relationships to our mothers and our husbands. For both of us, it appeared that we were both heavily influenced in our childhood, with our own family circumstances and by our own mothers. In one interview, the participant, Mia, reflected, “I always wanted to be a professional.” In another interview, we discussed how we were raised to think we could do anything and everything. For us, we felt we could “have it all.” Numerous times in the interviews Mia would quote, “You can have it all, but you can’t have it all at one time.” This was in direct contrast to what we were taught in our youth by our families and by the culture that surrounded us. For instance, Mia then commented. “It’s funny, when you’re a kid you think you can do everything. I think I’m still unrealistic.” As Mia and I continued to acknowledge our ties to home, we began to acknowledge the ties of family to our professional careers.
Unlike many professionals who interview and move based on the best job, both the participant and I felt bound to our geographical location because of our families and husbands. Each of us would remark, “I can’t uproot my family.” Because of this sentiment, even though the participant and I had a strong academic resume, we felt we had limited opportunities, but happily chose to work within those constraints. Although we both had strong goals, our goals were reshaped and continue to morph as the needs of our family change as well. Thus, as we walked through the spheres of home, work, and self we continued to change our direction and path in order to best meet the needs of others and to continually make compromises.

Although a great deal of the interviews and journal reflections focused on our professional careers, the conversation and reflections would often flow back into discussing our families; it seemed we were heavily influenced by our home sphere. Often, when the conversation would become constrained by the feelings of guilt, urgency, and the lack of time, funny asides would surface as if they were woven throughout the patchwork of the seriousness of our circumstances. One entry of mine simply read, “I’m so tired, I put my mail in the refrigerator.” Although work was affected by the lack of sleep because of our young children, we would often laugh about just how tired we truly were because of the combination of our work and family lives.

As contingent faculty members, often the participant and I would grade papers and work on lessons at home. In our second interview Mia admitted, “I let Campbell play by herself in the house.” Working from home with a child under the age of two certainly had many challenges. A journal entry dated December 1st provided a personal example. “
I just heard a rustling and looked over to discover Harper eating one of my student’s papers—in addition, she has them spread all over the room. It’s going to take me an hour to get them back in order and I’m going to have to explain the bitten off edges, but it’s still funny.” We continued to laugh in order to combat the stress of combining the spheres of work and home.

Even though we were forced to work between parenting duties, there were often times when our thoughts were happy and content. We were proud of our biological families and our students. In one of the interviews Mia reflected, “I love to teach…Teaching makes me feel like myself again, and helps me to be a better mother.” My feelings of accomplishment also extended to my students. For instance, on September 29 I wrote, “I finally graded my papers and I am proud of my students. I graded my papers while Harper played beside me. She seemed pretty content, so my guilt factor was lower for the day. Hooray for small victories.” Although the participant and I were tired and often discontent with our work environment, we were able to come together to talk openly and honestly about our feelings, the funny moments and the moments of frustration as well.

Often as we walked between the sphere of home and work the lines became blurred and mixed. In a journal reflection from November 7 Mia wrote, “My house is a mess of dog and Campbell, throw in I want to be writing, I need to be writing. It’s a mess.” I wrote in my journal on October 13, “It is very difficult to do research with a baby. I start looking at an article, and then I have to stop to chase the baby (right now she’s in the dog food bowl). I feel very scattered—like my house. There are books by
diapers, dissertation data mixed in with play toys. It’s hard to juggle everything—forget about neatness and organization.” In addition to the clutter, there simply was not enough time in the day for Mia or I to accomplish all of the things we needed to get done and were often “staying up all night.” As our husbands and babies slept silently beside us, we would work on growing our own futures in addition to shepherding theirs, the space between family and work was never neat or fixed.

**Work**

In the work sphere, our support was constrained by issues like poor conditions, again that we were tired, and that there was a disconnect from the rest of the institution as our goals did not match up with their goals. In the first interview I asked, “Why do you think we do this (work as an adjunct faculty member with a young child at home)?” Mia reflected. “Well, the main reason why I’m doing it is to keep working. To keep myself up, to keep my teaching game up. I also don’t want my resume to reflect I’ve been away from working so long. Also, I like to teach a lot and it gives me some adult time.” She continued, “Teaching allows me time away and with other teachers, grownups, and makes me feel productive but then it’s kind of like, I’m just making money to pay for daycare.” Mia felt very strongly that she needed to be writing to be successful. She stated, “I won’t feel successful unless I’m writing.” Teaching also allowed Mia a space to narrate her passions.

For myself, the innate urge to be successful as a mother and within my career also ran throughout my responses about my working environment. I felt that I had “set goals”
that needed to be accomplished. Like Mia, I too worried about the gap on my resume from motherhood. I constantly questioned why I made the personal and professional career choices I made and would make in the future.

*Katie:* I’m worried about the gap. It’s still unfair because, I wonder, why can’t you put stay at home mom on your resume, in bold letters, and it be highly admirable, because it’s hard.

*Mia:* Yes, experiential educator. Organized constructive play daily.

Facilitated. It’s just as hard as a job and everybody says that but people in the culture don’t believe it. In many ways it’s tougher because here I’m not responsible for the physical well being of the students at all times. At home we are responsible 100% 24 hours a day of this being needs, so I think it’s very different.

In one interview I reflected, “I’m struggling because I’m trying to decide if it’s time for me to look for a real job. I didn’t think I would be this way but the thought of leaving my baby makes me sick. I would love to work part-time because the thought of leaving Harper eight to five sends me into a tailspin.” I continued, “I’m getting a doctorate, what the hell am I doing, I’m going to be Dr. Mom, that’s a very expensive mommy career. I have to think I’ll be 30 when I get it, I’ve got time, so what if I don’t do something for a few years.” Mia also felt work pressures. On November 30th she remarked, “I need an excuse to write and to reason. I haven’t published anything in a long time…the other day I started freaking out that I hadn’t published anything in a long
time.” Clearly, both the participant and I understood our role conflicts and had strong goals, both professionally and personally, we were trying to obtain.

The constraints in the sphere of work were indeed the most influential aspect to the findings. The same recurring themes surfaced throughout the interviews and reflections. In addition to the lack of time, there was an overwhelming feeling of responsibility and a profound sense of guilt that flowed throughout our conversations. Mia revealed in our first interview, “I was a lot of things on campus before Campbell. I loved that, but now I couldn’t do it. I already feel badly I have to leave her. I feel guilty.” The first entry in my journal read, September 21: “Tuesdays are my hard days. I drive one hour to drop off Harper, another hour to my class, back to Harper, then to Greenville to take a class, back to Harper then to Asheville to put her to bed. I put $65.00 of gas in the car to do it. Why? Why am I dragging my child around to teach a one-hour freshman English class and to finish this PhD? Is it worth it? On Tuesdays, I wonder.”

At work, within the walls of the institution, there were other emotional and physical barriers we had to face as contingent faculty members. Since we were not considered part of the faculty, we were often ignored, silenced and hidden. A conversation that occurred in an interview about our shared office reflected our invisibility.

Katie: I don’t use our space very much because some people in at the college use it as a hideaway.

Mia: In the beginning I would have gotten upset about that stuff, but now I just let it go.
Mia: I don’t blame that people have to use it.

Mia: They used to store boxes in our room. My first semester I asked if we could put them somewhere else. It really shows you the value they have for us. I mean, three of us use the space. For the last two weeks I couldn’t even use our computer.

Katie: I learned not to trust that computer. I just put things on USB.

Mia: Last year they got a new computer, but it is a pain.

Katie: I feel isolated and abandoned.

Like motherhood, with moments of highs and lows, so too were our feelings within the university. In addition to the moments of fatigue and despair, there were positive moments that often reminded us about the things we enjoyed within the academic halls. For instance on November 7 I wrote, “I taught the kids something and had a nice time doing it. Today was a good day.” For both the participant and myself, our jobs were not simply about filling the gaps on our resume or making enough money for our children to go to childcare one day a week, although these were certainly important reasons as well. We too loved to teach, to build our craft and inspire our students to grow, develop and flourish on their own.

After the birth of our children, there was a disconnect within the institution that the participant and I had to combat. Although we were not outwardly discriminated, there were certainly consequences in our choice to have children. Mia reflected, “I was the go-to-girl,” but then realized that changed after she had Campbell. She did not get asked to
teach a class she had typically been asked to teach in the past. With a sense of growing frustration she spoke,

I’ve been going through all these emotions. First I was immature. God they don’t like me anymore, because I always got these [classes] in the past. Somebody else moved into the spot when I was gone to have a baby. I thought, my God I lost out. That was my first inclination to think that. Are you kidding, things are different. But then I think, well, I had to give up a course because I couldn’t figure out daycare for this semester so maybe she was trying to think about my schedule and thought it would be the same and that’s why she did it.

As evidenced in our work reflections, Mia and I often felt confused about our professional decisions, those we made and those made about us. We often felt abandoned and ignored. We felt we had to juggle the constraints of home and work, be as productive as possible, but also maintain a positive and happy environment for our families and ourselves.

Self

In the sphere of self, one of the largest contributing factors that affected our role as mothers in our professional career was the need to physically hide our maternal bodies. As contingent faculty members, mothers are often overlooked, and hidden. For instance, although we were trying to be the best professionals we could be, the pressure to conceal being a mother was a constant theme that surfaced throughout the investigation. For instance, in the workforce many women, not only in academia, feel the need to hide being
pregnant in order to secure a job. For women who work as part-time employees, the pressure becomes even greater. Mia reflected, “I did hide it. When I worked last summer at a community college, I was sort of obvious, I only ended up missing the last week of classes, but I graded papers in the hospital.” Perhaps one of the most poignant moments in the interview came when both Mia and I reflected on our birth experience and how even those powerful moments in the sphere of ourselves were enmeshed in our professional careers. The interview transcript of that conversation reflects both of our experiences.

Mia: Campbell was early. I ended up 20 hours later with an emergency C-section, so I was grading these research papers trying to recover and we had a pain medicine debacle. I was without pain medicine for nine hours after the C-section. I did everything in my power not to have a Cesarean, which of course happened. I was grading these papers. I remember looking around the hospital room trying to grade and knowing I had to get these grades in. I was silently crying as I looked around the room.

Although Mia often felt very isolated during those first few months of trying to juggle the birth of her child and the infancy of her career, she was not alone in her story.

Katie: I was thinking back, I went into the hospital very high risk and I’m thinking I have to send these emails, call these people. In one arm they’re putting pitocin in and the other hand is typing an apology email. The level of guilt was ridiculous-- here I am sending out these emails, she’s born, the next day I’m grading papers and then we go home. Harper couldn’t eat or drink. I
had to feed her with a syringe and pump. So, that was a nightmare, 12 times a day, and I remember in the very early weeks at 2:00 in the morning, pumping, feeding with a syringe, and trying to grade papers. I’m sure I did a terrible job grading them, but the fact that my memory of the birth and of the first few weeks is desperately trying to get through the semester is sad.

After the birth of our children, we continued to have to hide our physical maternal bodies. For instance, Mia and I often reflected on having to hide in the bathroom to pump milk for our babies; we literally did not have a “room of our own.” Mia commented, “There’s a little part of me that gets upset about all the other people that use our space.”

The issues of lack of space ran symbolically much deeper than just physically having a place to pump. We felt cut off from our peers.

In the sphere of ourselves, both the participant and I discussed the feelings of isolation we felt. Over and over our pages and stories were filled with the thought, “I wish I had someone to talk to.” We often reflected on the saying “It takes a village” to raise a child; we felt there were no villages. In the sphere of our self, we felt a lack of support when there was isolation, guilt, problems with time, compromises to be made, again, that we were tired, and that we needed help from other mothers. In the sphere of our selves, success was measured through our compromises, in our small accomplishments, and through our validation as mothers.

To combat the problems presented in all three spheres, Mia and I discussed at length ways to make our present circumstances better. For both of us, we discussed the need for other mothers as mentors. Further, to have access to the mentors, there needed to
be childcare available for all faculty, not just full-time faculty. We had an intense
conversation about possibilities for the future.

Katie: (Thinks for awhile--)--Let’s start with mentor or support groups?

Mia: It’s another thing that I have to think about how to arrange time to meet
with other people.

Katie: What if you could take your children?

Mia: Laughs, I don’t think anything would get done but I think it would help, I
do.

Katie: Okay, well what if you could take your children and they would be
taken care of while you met with your group?

Katie: I’m just thinking out loud here what if there was a place where there
was a community of women where you went to help each other and you bring
your children and maybe one person would rotate each time who takes care of
the kids in another room.

Mia: That would be great. That’s what my sister’s Bible study group does and
one of the couple’s takes the kids each time.

Katie: Churches have been doing this, but why can’t we do it in other venues?

There is a whole group of women who are trying to do both.

Mia: I would really love a mentor group but both would be great. It’s just
time. The kids somehow have to be involved.

Katie: There is so much research about how if you could have mentors...

people could do better.
Mia: If it was with women and layered in women who are mothers that would be great.

Mia: It would be very helpful. This was built-in in the old days, people had tribes.

Katie: Yeah, the “It takes a village..”

Mia: Now we don’t have that.

Katie: It’s sad because there is no village, no support, you might have some friends but they can’t really help you.

Mia: They are suffering themselves.

Katie: Most institutions are still set up in a masculine, wife at home working environment.

Katie: I know there is no money, but I think to start on a small scale it would be nice to have somewhere to talk where you could also bring your kids.

Childcare in academic institutions is the idea solution. It could be a part of work-study, education students it could be credit. It would be a perfect thing for the school to do.

Katie: There are tons of people that could help run it, why is it not happening?

Mia: And if it were for adjuncts? It would never be for us. But that would be the ideal.

Katie: Childcare is the most practical. I think the support groups would be more fruitful for the soul where the childcare covers the logistics.
Throughout the dialogue of all of the areas of home, work and self, it was evident that there was a need for women to grow and connect. It seems we truly were and are lacking a village of support.

As evidenced through stage setting, vignettes, and interview transcripts, telling our lived stories was a cathartic process that allowed the participant and I to reflect on our own narratives. Although a great deal of the interviews focused on our frustrations and fatigue, there were very heartfelt moments that arose out of the transcripts. Our stories revealed the highs and lows related to our experiences as mothers and contingent faculty members. The transcripts revealed there are no binaries of sorrow and happiness or pleasure and guilt for the participant or I. Like our experiences walking through and amongst the spheres of home, work and self, our emotions and our experiences ebbed and flowed through moments of bliss and stress. However, the feelings of fatigue, isolation and stress are areas that certainly need to be recognized. We need to form support groups with other women, and open up this area of research, specifically about how to change the patriarchal institution from a male model, in order to find ways to help each other rise and to create those absent villages.

**Conclusion and Planned Changes**

Through the development of conceptual categories (Sipe and Ghiso 2004), the pilot study findings suggested success is often measured in increments of time in all three spheres. Scholars need to examine how to help new mothers who are also contingent faculty members find time, and therefore support, in the form of daycare, mentoring
programs, higher salaries and so forth. Since the struggles for support for contingent faculty members and new mothers often does not align with the institution’s goals, the mother’s struggles represent an additional layer to how there is a lack of alignment of goals for institutions and their part-time employees and that the layer adds another layer to the lack of support presented in the patriarchal institution of the academe. I believe this study, as an autoethnographic exploration of the lived experiences, served as the foundation for the dissertation.

Since there is a significant gap in the research about the lived experience of new mothers who are also contingent faculty members, this pilot study was, however, most certainly warranted. The emerging themes presented in this pilot were used to inform my dissertation. While the study was necessary, some might find concern with my choice of methodology. I concluded from the pilot study an autoethnographic exploration most accurately fits with the research questions. Further, I found that including the “I” in research was a positive, post-modern shift that is an important approach for the projected study.

I feel this pilot study allowed me to see commonalities amongst our voices as new mothers and contingent faculty members. In addition, study results presented problems to determine implications for future research. The autoethnographic methodology allowed me to “build relationships, get to know each other, and will be able to put the subject at ease” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 103). We built a relationship that reflected our experiences as new mothers who are also contingent faculty members.
I have shown some perspectives regarding the increasing demands working mothers have within academia, particularly part-time faculty, as we strive to find a balance between our personal and professional lives. Overwhelmingly, there is a feeling of guilt as we are bound to both spheres of work and home while also trying to maintain a sense of autonomy.

The pilot study informed the dissertation because the research offered a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of our lived experience. Further, the study illuminated the need for change in the culture of the academe. The pilot study influenced the dissertation because it showed the need to examine the lack of family-friendly policies (Wilson, 2008).

Since this was a small pilot study, the most critical limitation in the data analysis was that the data was only about myself and one other participant at one particular four-year institution in the southeast United States. In the dissertation, I will examine the narratives of more women at more institutions. Further, since the participant and I both have similar backgrounds, such as that we are White. middle class and married, the voice was only reflective of our experiences. Additionally, since the pilot study only lasted one semester, the participant and I lacked time to fully develop a relationship that would allow for an even greater understanding of our shared experiences. In the dissertation, I included the voice of more women, with different backgrounds, from various institutions. I also incorporated additional elements into my literature review and analysis that were informed by the pilot study.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

Introduction

There were many notable findings in this study about how new mothers, with pre-
school aged babies and toddlers, who are also contingent faculty members make meaning
of the complexity of the interlocking spheres of home, work and self. For instance,
although there were distinct characteristics of the spheres, there were a variety of
intersecting commonalities. As illustration, there was a common theme about how
support and success is measured within and amongst the different worlds we constantly
navigate; it appeared success is often measured in relation to time in all three realms.
Although there are moments of stress and frustration, we are also aware of our successes
as we divide our time amongst the spheres.

In addition to many intersecting themes, there were many overlapping metaphors
that occurred within the narrative inquiry. Since women often use the story as a way to
express themselves (Etter-Lewis, 1991), the use of the intersecting metaphors also
illuminated various findings of the study. For example, in all three spheres, the women
talked about wanting to “do it all,” but realizing that they could not “do it all at one time.”
Instead, the women had to constantly “figure it out,” on how they were going to divide up
their time and so forth. Obviously, the women could not literally do everything, nor could
they do everything at the same time. However, their desire to do it all in all three spheres
was an intersecting metaphor that repeatedly emerged throughout the transcripts.
Furthermore, another area that was evident in all three spheres of home, work and self was the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry; temporality, sociality and place. Most importantly, temporality played a major factor in all three spheres. The women’s past experiences shaped not only how they lived their lives in the present, but also about how they defined themselves. For instance, all women defined themselves as mothers, first. Their careers came second to their roles as mothers. Although the women acknowledged that their professional aspirations were important, they were all comfortable that professional goals “went on the back burner” in comparison to spending time with their young children. Also, the women’s acknowledgement of the three commonplaces helped the researcher though the narrative inquiry answer the research question.

The research question for this study was: How do new mothers, with children under the age of six who are also contingent faculty members at four-year institutions, make meaning of the complexity of the interlocking spheres of home, work and self? Specifically, how are support and success measured within and amongst the different spheres we constantly navigate? In order to study these overarching research questions, I used narrative inquiry, and the three commonplaces, to explore how our narratives showed lived experiences within the academe and how are these narratives are a representation and critique of the present culture.

For the purposes of the study, the three spheres of home, work, and self defined the main areas of the participant’s lives as well as mine. After examining the transcripts, I the information about the participant’s lives was categorized into the three separate
sphere of home, work and self. Home sphere was defined, as all elements of our lives that have to do with our home, like family and location. The work sphere was defined as the institution where we work and the people who are within it. Finally, the self-sphere was everything that encompassed our autonomy and all areas of our lives that affected our minds and bodies.

In this study, I interviewed four women who are new mothers and contingent faculty members at four-year institutions within a 50-mile radius of my home. I have included a table outlining the participant’s descriptions as Appendix G. Additionally, I used autoethnographic techniques to include my own voice in the narrative inquiry. Through this analysis, I illuminated how we construct and live our experiences within the academe.

Through analysis of the data it appeared that the participants and I constantly navigated between the spheres of home, work and self, all which are entwined as we walked among and through the spheres. Success was measured in relation to time in all of the three realms. In fact, a sense of urgency flowed throughout the interviews and was felt in the journal entries; it appeared we were always in a battle with the clock. Although there were areas of the findings that intersected the three spheres, I organized the data into the three spheres of home, work and self. I discussed the common themes and metaphors presented in each sphere. Following individual inspection of the spheres, I noted the intersections and offered further implications.
Home

Based on the findings from the participants, it seems the home sphere occupied the most of our time and mental energy. Even if the women met in their offices, or in eateries, their minds seemed to stay in the home. Since the women identified themselves as mothers, first, it quickly became apparent that the women wanted to speak most about their roles as mothers, rather than discuss their occupations or the time they take for themselves. In the home-sphere, the most important themes were the importance of the women’s background, the significance of time management, support for the children, internal and external goals, and the influence of their husbands. The metaphor that was the most persistent for the narrative inquiry in the home sphere was that the women did not want to sacrifice their children on the altar of their careers. Although the women acknowledged they wanted to be professionals, they all noted that motherhood was their number one goal and responsibility.

Family Size

In all of the spheres, the mother’s background history within the particular domain played an important factor within the interview. For most of the women, including myself, motherhood was always an important element of the dreams of our lives. For example, for Pam, who has a thirteen year old daughter and fosters two children under the age of two, having a large family was always a goal and reality within the household. Pam commented they started fostering children when her daughter was six.
Many of the women discussed how the size of their family has changed over time, and also whether or not they were going to have more children. The women wanted at least two children. However, for those who had only one child, there appeared to be a hesitation in how the second child would affect the home life and their careers. For instance, Mia commented she and her husband “planned on starting” to have a second child in the fall (one year later than originally discussed) but that she wanted to see how her writing career was going first. She said her husband said, “You need to be able to have flexibility. You don’t need to be tied down to being here all week long. Granted, as much flexibility as you can have with a two and a half year old.” Mia continued, “Next year I hopefully will be pregnant, so it’s going to be a bit nutty.”

Amy noted, “My husband would like a second child and I’m more hesitant because I want to be far along in my career, because I’ve heard going from one to two is the biggest adjustment. My friends have said going from one to two is even more of an adjustment than just adding one.” She continued, “I want to have a year to be with the baby. I don’t want to do any paper, grant writing, meeting with students, I don’t want to do that. I don’t mind teaching, I like that. Honestly, I like the break. I don’t want to have the baby all day long. I like the break. But I don’t want to do the other stuff.” Later in the interview Amy added,

_So that’s the one thing about having a second and having my career is that I know it will be difficult. I’m sure whatever I figure out will work. I’ll come to peace with it. But I won’t come to peace with putting my newborn baby into_
daycare full-time. I won’t do it. I won’t come to peace with that. It isn’t how I envisionsed my life and how I want to parent.

Amy elaborated,

*By the same token, I know going from one to two is an adjustment, so I want to be really available to my kids because I think it’s going to be hard. So I don’t want to be working, figuring out sitters, and all that. If we have a second, they’ll be more like five years apart. We wanted them closer, but that’s fine.*

For myself, my husband and I decided to have a second child, but it was with a certain degree of hesitation. Like Amy, my husband wanted a second child with less hesitation than myself. I worried that having another child would affect all of the spheres of my life, but I also knew that having two children is how I see my family. These sentiments were evident in a journal entry from January 16. “I know that having a second baby is what I want for my family, but I’m worried about how it’s going to affect my future career goals. I already feel like I’ve given up my autonomy, but will I lose every shred of my career and personal goals if I give my body and soul to another baby? I know I’ll love this little boy or girl, but I am definitely scared how it’s going to affect my life.”

Like Mia, Pam has only one biological child. However, for her family, who has fostered at least one child under three years old in her home for the past ten years, whether or not to add more children to their family permanently played a significant role in the home sphere. In many of our phone conversations and emails, Pam expressed her desire to foster children. She constantly remarked about her conflicting emotions, on the
one hand, she wanted to foster more children but on the other, she worried about how more children would affect her home life. As she mentioned, “It’s pretty emotionally intensive, especially when they go and you slowly get the picture of what they’ve been through. You start to get a sense of what goes on, and why they are with you.” She stated,

They are amazing kids. It’s very cool. We started out thinking we wanted to adopt one sibling set—a boy and a girl that I would have kept in a heartbeat. But I think now, I’m 42, um you know, I don’t think it’s the right time for us to adopt an under three year old anymore, but our home really is a place for them. I’ve been able to form a really supportive relationship with them, so I think this might be one of the cases where I get to stay involved in their lives once they go home. It’s good for everybody. I’m very hopeful for that.

Age of Mother and Children

The age of the children, and the age of the mother seemed to have a direct impact on the findings of the study. Mia was thirty-two years old. She had a two-year-old daughter. Pam was forty-two. She had a thirteen-year-old daughter, but also had a twenty five month old and an eleven-month old foster children who have been within the family for eleven months. Amy was thirty-five and had a daughter who was three. Jenny was thirty-seven and had a daughter who was eleven, a son who is ten, and a son who was five. Finally, I had a two year old and delivered a second child on June 27th. The first interesting finding in the home sphere was the aforementioned dilemma of many of the women about whether or not to expand their family. The second remarkable finding
embedded within the narratives was how the level of acceptance of the choices of the mother within the home increased with age of the mother and the age of the children.

Mia, Amy, and myself, who had young children and who are under the age of thirty-five faced different struggles within the home sphere and how it affected the other domains of our lives. In an email from Mia on March 30th, she sent me a cartoon depicting what a stereotypical new mother with young children looked like, unbrushed hair, unbrushed teeth and so forth. We often forwarded each other blog posts or website links to pictures and stories of young mothers that represented the struggles we felt in the home on a daily basis. Additionally, it also seemed that there was more anxiety within our lives and our choices than the women with older children felt. We felt more uncertainty about our future. For instance, I often worried I’m not making the right choices for my family. I felt more confusion about my future and the choices I will make in the future. While we often exchanged humorous artifacts that reflected our present circumstances, we also acknowledged the underling tensions we felt as young mothers with young children.

For Pam, who was forty-two, whose biological child is eleven and has two foster children under two, and for Jenny, who is thirty-seven, and who also has older children, in addition to a young child, their perspectives about the choices they have made within the home sphere appear more relaxed. The women did not seem to feel as much angst about their choices. Both women were able to look back on the work decisions that were influenced by the home sphere with from a different perspective. Jenny commented, “It’s funny, when I went to grad school I thought I wanted to be a professor, but I also wanted
kids. I don’t think I thought through how that would work. I never really thought. I never thought about how that would actually work out.” She later continued, “Being a mother of children is not easy, so I think about the choices I made. I didn’t finish the PhD and I go back and forth about whether I should finish it.” Even though Jenny thought about her future choices, she seemed content with the choices within the home sphere. She seemed happy about how she chose to put her home sphere first.

During the interview Jenny revealed how she felt proud about her family choices. As she spoke about a meeting with her boss, a male-mentor, she reflected on a conversation that occurred between the two of them.

“My boss said he was a workaholic. He told he how he looked back on his life and he missed a lot of time with his daughter because he was working on his PhD, working full-time, while his daughter was small. He looks back and thinks, “I didn’t have to do all that. I should have said no to some things to have more time with his daughter.” He told me he was impressed that I do what I do in the sense that my family comes first, my children have priority.

In the interview, Jenny also showed me an email exchange she had with her boss regarding her decision to put family, first. For Jenny, she looked at her time within the home sphere and felt comfortable about the choices she made involving how many children to have and to not put the work sphere above the home.

Pam, who has fostered children for over ten years, also felt content in the dynamic of a family. As we spoke in the bakery, she took a moment to show me numerous
pictures of her family. Her eyes sparkled as she discussed how fostering has been such a large part of her home.

*On our honeymoon, we talked about having a child and adopting a child. And we have not adopted, but fostering is where we ended up. I worked until 2005 and I took a break with Helen. Before that I worked for six years writing grants. One of the places I worked did a lot of work for foster kids so that’s how I became aware of them. One of the counselors adopted her foster child, had a ceremony. It was very moving and I realized the need of children in our community.*

From that point on, Pam and her family became heavily involved in fostering young children. Like Jenny, she chose to put some of her academic goals on hold in order to meet the needs of her family. For instance, Pam chose to do double masters instead of a PhD because of the proximity of the school to her family. Like Jenny, she thought about going back to school but felt comfortable in her past decisions.

**Mother’s Present Roles**

The mother’s present roles as an active mother within the house also heavily affected the home sphere. In addition to working, all of the mothers felt a strong desire to be present for their families. Jenny remarked,

*It’s funny, being a full-time mom, I look back and I think, man I was not a good stay at home mom. My house was reasonably clean, my children were fed and they were clean, but I was just not... I did not get on the floor and*
play with my children, I did not say, hey let’s go outside and play, I would say you go and play. I mean, I was not... I am not that kind of mother, I’m not. I think my children are fairly well adjusted in spite of it (laugh). That’s just not how I interacted with my kids, it’s still not the way I interacted with my kids, but I wanted them to be at home. I did not want them to not have any memories of being at home. I didn’t want all of their memories to be at being at some other caregivers’ place.

When the mothers had to leave their children to do work, there was often a strong sentiment of guilt. For example, Mia, who was also getting a MFA from a low residency program, and I commented:

Mia: I think (sighs, lots of children noises in the background). So when I have to leave, I still feel guilty about that. I don’t feel guilty about when I went to school, but I do feel guilty about leaving her for twelve days. I’m coming to a place, though, where I do have to work while she’s at home. There have been days recently where she’s watched a lot of cartoons, and I do feel guilty about that still.

Katie: Harper will play by herself, but then she wants me to play with her or do something destructive, but I do it too (let her watch TV).

Mia: For two months it was like Pavlov’s dog. She would come over and want to do something else, and that was rough, but I feel like I’m in a more confident place as a mom and as a parent so I don’t feel quite as anxious about everything. So that’s different than it was a year ago.
Katie: I agree.

Often, the women tried to work their job schedule around their children in a manner that would have the least impact on the children within the home. All of the women, including myself, utilized the evenings, early mornings, and nap times for work related activities. Jenny noted, “I was able to find a college student who didn’t have class and she would come during his nap, so most of the time he didn’t even know that I wasn’t there. So then I had the best of both worlds because I could be gone during napt ime and I wouldn’t miss anything with him.” Amy also talked about the importance of a sitter and napt ime. “I worked while I had Joy, but she was a really good baby, so I only had a babysitter two afternoons. Otherwise I worked while she napped. The sitters would come; I paid them for ten hours a week of care. Otherwise I worked when she napped.” Later in the interview Amy also noted, “Joy naps from 1:00 to 3:00. When she naps, I work again, then I’m with her from three until bedtime. Then I work at night. I work 8:00-10:00 or 8:00-10:30, but I will say this: Tuesday and Thursday afternoons I have a sitter come so I can go to meetings.”

I added, “That’s what I do, too. I really hope she doesn’t give up her afternoon nap anytime soon!” Pam noted, “From infancy to kindergarten I thought I could fit in my job requirements between naps and in the evening, but that doesn’t really work, so that was hard. Naps aren’t as consistent as you need them to be.”

In addition to utilizing childcare and napt ime within the home, which was often fraught with complications, many of the women worked early in the morning or late into the night in order to get their work done. For instance, Mia noted she was setting her
alarm an hour earlier than usual so she could work before Campbell woke up. “That’s the guilty part, here I am not writing as much as I should. If I was awake at night, it would be wonderful, but I’m tired. I’ve been trying to set my alarm and get up early, but it wakes Campbell up.” Pam, on the other hand, would often stay up late. “I climb in bed with my laptop by about 8:00 until 10:30 or so.” Like the difficulties with working around a babysitter’s and a nap’s schedule, often the women’s intentions for working during these hours did not work. For instance, Mia noted she wanted to work at night, but she just couldn’t keep up with the demands. “By night, I’m so tired. I can’t imagine being pregnant and doing schoolwork. I think my brain would be fried.” Although the women tried to maintain a home/work balance within the parameters of the needs of their children, the children’s needs often intersected with the demands on the mothers from outside the home. For instance, although the women tried to work within these boundaries, the children were often physically present in the background.

Many of the interviews were laced with background noises of our children, especially my interview with Mia. On a chilly morning in February, at Mia’s bungalow, we were able to sit down with our two children, amongst baskets of toys, and reflect. In order to be active parents, and because of time restraints, Mia and I chose to do her interview within the setting of her home, where Campbell and Harper could play in the background. Furthermore, in an email exchange with Mia it was apparent that a home visit was the only feasible way to fit the interview into her hectic schedule. On January 3rd, she said, “I've got a crazy schedule, and won't be able to talk until I return. Right now, and I predict for the next month, my schedule is insane and I'm not sure I could
swing meetings so soon.” She added, “I really need to get home and take a couple weeks to get my time coordinated. I would love to hang out with you, especially, but it may be difficult at first. Maybe we could meet up towards the end of this month? You and Harper could even come to my house one afternoon.” By doing the interview in Mia’s home with our children, I was able to observe how children had a direct impact on our ability to be both working moms and active parents.

Mia’s role as an active parent was evident throughout the transcripts as the interview stopped so that we could parent. The transcripts revealed both of our abilities to multitask, as we would jump from one conversation to talking with our children, back to an important topic. There were a myriad of responses such as when Mia scolded Campbell, “Hey honey, we’re not going to put that on the counter…No ma’am.” In fact, the closing remark on the transcript tape was, “Hey sweetheart, let’s not climb up there, it’s not real sturdy.” Although we were able to have an open dialogue about our experiences, our attention was often redirected to our children. For instance, in the two-hour interview with Mia, there was at least eleven times where we stopped to parent our children who were present in the meeting.

The conversations with our children ranged from helping them, to soothing them, to scolding them. Our ability to jump back and forth from a serious conversation to parenting our children showed our desire to be with our children and our ability to simultaneously multitask. Often the children would come up to us to ask for attention. They would crawl into our laps with toy giraffes or something pretend to eat. If they continued to feel that their needs were not being met, they would ask for things, like
blocks or to watch television. Many times in the interview there were asides like, “Hey bug, you’re kinda interrupting, why don’t you go play?” or “Can you play a bit longer?” We would often have to scold them when they felt that they were not at the center of their egocentric world. For instance, there were many comments in the interview like, “Hey honey, we’re not going to...” Occasionally, one of the children would get hurt. They “bonked their knees, which had to be kissed, or they hit their heads on the sides of tables”. As the interview progressed, the children’s need for attention climaxed. There were a few, “Mama said no’s,” and other retorts. Additionally, there were many pauses in the interview where Mia would have to tend to her child, like setting up a table for the girls to draw on, getting out various toys, and so forth. During many of the interviews, it was evident that the ability to multitask, specifically within the home, and how this translated into factors of time became apparent.

I had a similar dilemma with my interview with Jenny. Although I planned the interview during Harper’s nap, that day she decided she did not need one. Since Jenny also had a very tight scheduling timeframe, we decided to make the interview work. During the two hours, there were many pauses in the conversation, as I too had to attend to my child’s needs. For example, there were a few moments on the transcript where Harper was crying in the background. Once she climbed into my lap and tried to get me to read her a book during the meeting. Jenny reflected, “I promise, they do grow up and then you’ll think, how does this happen, where does the time go?”

Many of the other women understood the time restraints about motherhood and working, even if their children were not physically present during the interviews. For
instance, while Mia and I had to multitask with our children outside of the home, many of
the other women often spoke about how they had to manage their children and work
within the home. For instance, Pam reflected on multitasking within the home. “I was
writing lectures and papers having Elizabeth at the chair, giving her spoons to play with
and I’m planning out statements as I’m cooking dinner, and I’m frantically trying to write
things down.”

Lack of Time

All of the women whom I interviewed discussed how there was never enough
time. In the home sphere, this often translated into the inability to keep up with domestic
chores and responsibilities while also trying to maintain a sense of autonomy. For some
of the women, the domestic responsibilities was the tipping point of maintaining a sense
of order in the interlocking spheres of home, work and self. Pam reminisced, “At the
beginning, I had a three year old and a one year old with Elizabeth. There was a period of
time where I was going to school, working part-time, and had the children.” She
reflected, “At night, laundry, with all of those people in the house, was a big deal. I
remember thinking that laundry was the tipping point for me (laughs). I was
overwhelmed with laundry and fatigue.” A personal reflection of mine, dated March 3\textsuperscript{rd},
reflected the same sentiments. “I feel like I don’t have control of my home. Just when I
think I’m getting ahead of the game, I realize I have to do laundry! Laundry and dishes
never end. I can never get ahead.”
The home routine was an important element to the home sphere. Pam gave me a detailed description of how she handled time management.

Now, in the morning, Bob (her husband) brings Aiden to me at around 6-6:30 with a bottle and we cuddle for 30 minutes. I then get up and we bathe all of the children. Then we all carpool to the childcare center around 8:30 then I get dressed and I spend 15-20 minutes getting the house in order. Then I go to work. Bob and I have lunch together everyday. Then, depending on the evenings, I’ll get home, and since we’ve had the boys, we’ve been eating out more, but that’s the tipping point, I haven’t been able to do that. Then we play on the floor (it’s the sweet time), we read books, and tickle. We feed the boys and get them down by 6:30 or 7:00—we each take one, then we eat...something take out or quick. I climb in bed with my laptop by about 8 until 10-11:30 or so.

During our interview, I also observed Pam’s schedule. She showed me her planner, which was filled with detailed descriptions of her daily activities.

A lot of women felt resentment about their gendered expectations within the home that affected time management. Amy noted when she started working outside the home, “I still did the cleaning, the cooking, I still did all the bills. I still did all the caretaking of Joy, so nothing changed. That’s when I got resentful.” In fact, our interview had to be rescheduled because the day of the interview was a snow-day from school and she, instead of her husband, had to change her schedule around for the day to take care of Joy. She reminisced,
Perfect example, on Monday we had that awful snow day. I woke up and was like, “Oh my God, this is a crazy snow day, and so then he was like yeah…..and I was like, “Joy doesn’t have school today” and he says, “Okay”, and walks into his office. So later I was like, “Mike, it’s not that I mind taking care of our daughter, what bothers me is that you don’t even think about it. You just assume.” I just want the conversation. I don’t mind that it is me, I love my daughter. I was going to be with her regardless, but it’s just that I want the conversation that, “Oh, is it you, is it me, how are we making this happen?”, and he was like, “you are right”. It’s not that he argues with me about it, it’s just that he doesn’t always think about it.

Need for Support

One way the women combated time management issues was through the recurring theme of the need for support. Within the home sphere, this often translated into outside help, like the use of preschool. All of the women utilized some sort of support for their children outside of the home that was not within the workplace. One interesting finding was that four out of the five women used a church preschool that was located within walking distance to their college campuses. Pam, the only women who used full-time daycare, used a facility that was also within five minutes of campus. In order to be with their children as much as possible and to be able to work, we all found affordable ways to have someone look after their children while we had to be outside of the home.
Mia noted that Campbell went to preschool four days a week, from 9:00 to 12:00. However, she said, “When it really comes down to it, that’s about two hours by the time I get her there, pick her up. She still takes a nap, but it’s just not enough of a chunk of time for me. I usually grade papers during this time.” I added, “That’s what I do too. Harper goes to school eight hours a week. That and naps is when I try to get my work done for school and the dissertation, but I’m pregnant, I’m going to have my second baby in July. So I’m really trying to get a lot done. I would like to have a great deal of my work done before he gets here so I don’t have to do it at the very end with a little baby and a two year old because that sounds hard, so I’m trying to push through to the end.”

Amy talked a great deal about the need for good preschool services when she could not work at home either while her child was sleeping or with an at-home babysitter. “Joy is in a Montessori preschool 8:30 to 11:00 Monday through Friday, so every morning she’s gone. Basically I exercise, email, grade papers, then I go and pick her up.” Later in the interview she continued,

*Now that Joy is 2-3, I was very much ready to have her in preschool. The toddler stage is so challenging. The one lesson I’ve learned a lot is that nothing is constant. So, even though in my mind I thought it was going to be so difficult, it really wasn’t as difficult because I was ready for her to be in preschool, I was like you need it, I need it, so we’re good.*

Like Amy, many women felt a conflict about putting their young children into daycare. However, their level of guilt seemed to decrease as the age of the children
increased. Jenny also reflected on the importance of being able to send her children to part-time preschool so she could work.

*Thankfully, the church here adjacent to campus has a preschool. The school asked me to start adjuncting during the day, so my son started going to the church. It’s funny, at first I did not want him to go to preschool. The other two children did not go to preschool. They stayed at home with me, they were fine, so why did he need to go to preschool. And, I had this really bad connotation that here were these people were shoving their kids into preschool and they weren’t spending anytime with their babies, and that made me sad. But when we sent him to preschool, it was…. Well, my other two are very close together and... Taylor was home by himself, he was bored to death. Since it wasn’t full-time, he got a chance to play with people, but then he got to have his down time too.*

Pam was the only woman whose children went to daycare full-time. She was also the only mother who has multiple children under the age of two who were foster children. Pam’s biological child was in school. Additionally, the department of social services paid for childcare of foster children. Like the other women, however, the convenience of the school and the high standards of it were significantly important to her within the home sphere. She began her discussion with childcare by noting. “When I started adjuncting we had a three year old and a one year old. In between there, we also had a couple of short-term placements. Heartbreaking placements. We then had a four-month placement with a two year old. We’ve been so blessed because there is a high level of trust childcare center
Here. I’ve never had a complaint, so that’s a relief.” Later she mentioned, “So we have always pieced it together but it’s interesting when foster children come because child care is hard for them to pull off. When they go into childcare, it’s a buildup. So we’ll spend the first few months with all of us getting viruses, so it’s a mess. We’re all getting sick.” Although full-time daycare had its positive and negative side effects, it was a very important form of support within the home sphere for all of the women.

In addition to external support within the home sphere from preschool and childcare, many of the women utilized the support of their family, particularly women. Mia reflected, “My mother is really supportive. She’s very helpful. My mom’s sixty-three. She worked full-time as a teacher so she understands…Sometimes she comes up in the middle of the day when I can’t find a babysitter.” Pam also talked about the importance of the proximity of her mother and her ability to help with Elizabeth. Both of Pam’s parents live in the same small town as she and her husband. She reflected that they were only a phone call away. “My mom is helpful. She is helpful in her own way.” Additionally, my mother has also helped out. When I had to drive to my classes for the PhD, she watched Harper during the day so I did not have to pay for childcare.

In addition to mothers, many other women in the family helped in the raising of our children. For Amy, she often received help from her sisters. In fact, she was at her sister’s home during our Skype interview. Furthermore, I could hear her sister taking care of Joy in the background. She said, “I have two sisters and both of them have kids around my daughter’s age”. She noted that during the interview her sister said, “Why don’t you come and I’ll take Joy for three days and you can get work done.’ Of course, I said,
‘fabulous’, so my daughter is with her aunt for the next three days while I finish papers, grants, grading, and all sorts of crap.” I also received help from the women in my family. When I worked part-time as an adjunct after Harper was born, my grandmother watched Harper during my classes.

**Academic Aspirations for Childcare**

In addition to the desire to have the children in strong preschool programs and around powerful maternal role models, all of the women discussed the importance of their children’s academic upbringing as a goal that they wanted to instill in their children within the home sphere. For instance, it was very important for Amy and for Pam that their daughters went to a preschool within a Montessori program. For Pam, she felt very strongly about teaching her daughter how to read. “It was cool because I stayed home with Elizabeth and I did it because I wanted to be the person who taught her how to read, so we did it together and it was amazing.” Since Pam’s daughter was older than the other participant’s children, she was also able to talk about her academic goals and aspirations for Elizabeth, as she has grown older. For instance, she fondly told me a story of when she worked as a freelance writer. “The year I was getting my Master’s degree I also started writing parenting articles for a website. Over the summer they decided to do a print magazine so I also edited the magazine, but the cool thing with Elizabeth is that she could be my copywriter so it was something we could do together. That was really great.” She also mentioned,
Another interesting dynamic for me during this time as a mother and working was that we had Elizabeth in a Montessori school and she aged out. We decided it was time for her to move on into the 5th grade, and she was placed in the gifted program, and she was highly gifted, so her having to deal with a non-graded to traditional, EOG, labeling and not understanding. So there has been a lot of coaching and working to find the best environment for her—that has been a big priority for us.

The foster children’s academic background was also important to Pam. “So now with Jonathan, we figured out he had a hearing loss. Now at twenty-five months he’s talking and saying all kinds of things. As a teacher, I love language. I watched a child not have the tools he needed and watched him emerge. It’s very cool.”

Mia, who was in the process of having her first novel published, also discussed the importance of teaching language to her children. As she talked about the difficulties of her students, she transitioned from the frustrations of her students and the cultural basis of the problems. She reflected,

*I think it’s the culture. I used to think it was the type of students the college brought in. I think from talking to other professors, and not all kids are like that, but I think it’s the atmosphere. I think it’s widespread and I think it’s terrifying. I think you have to get kids to start reading to fall in love with books at a young age and do stoke that as long and as hard as you can. I think reading is the key to everything. I know I try to teach that to Campbell already.*
For myself, I too am highly passionate about the academic upbringing of Harper and for her love of the narrative form. Since I have a Master’s in English, I felt very passionately about giving her this academic talent. Every day, we spent at least twenty minutes together reading. It was my dream and my goal to be the one to teach her how to read and to instill in her the love of the story.

**Internal Goals**

There were other internal goals that focused around the home sphere. Many of them focused on the dynamics of the family life previously discussed. For instance, the future size of the family, how to manage time management, how the women wanted to utilize their time and so forth were critical themes within their narratives. While the women talked a great deal about their time within the work sphere, there were large sections of the transcripts that focused on the internal goals of the family that did not intersect with work life. For example, Pam spent a great deal of her interview discussing her passion for fostering children and the importance of motherhood. Many of her stories were touching accounts of how fostering children had shaped her family life and how she saw the purpose of her life.

While there were many noteworthy excerpts of her stories of fostering children, there were a few narratives that seemed to most affect the internal goals of the home sphere and how it shaped Pam as a mother. First of all, Pam felt it was important to talk about when she and her husband starting fostering children.
When we started, Elizabeth was six and the oldest foster girl in the house was three. The foster child had attachment disorder issues, so the minute she saw me it was ‘my momma’. She really knew how to push Elizabeth’s buttons. We actually took a break for awhile because of that for Elizabeth but then we came back in when Elizabeth was old enough to feel that she was part of our team instead of competing with the kids. That’s been really good for her. She was very attached to the girl before this. She still has a picture of her in the room. We talk about all the kids, but the baby’s first word was Elizabeth. He follows her around the room. She said, ‘Babies are a lot of work’. It’s hard to keep all the balls in the air.

While fostering has played a positive and negative emotional toll on Pam’s family members, it was obvious from the interview that she felt this was her primary passion and purpose in life—to raise her children and to help foster others. She talked a great deal about stories of the foster children over the past ten years and showed me many artifacts that relayed her passion. She mentioned a little girl who witnessed her father murder someone at eighteen months. She talked about the picture of the two little boys she kept in her bedroom. She mentioned how she thought about all of the children everyday. Her most poignant narrative came towards the end of the interview. With a tear in her eye, she reflected,

There are moments with the foster parenting where I get these pictures, like I had this little girl who was three and half and this was her fourth home. She had been rotated around a lot because she had been sexually abused by each
home, and one of them was a foster parent. It was terrible, terrible... She came to our house filthy and she came in the middle of the night and she had fallen asleep and Bob put her on an air mattress in our room and we got up and she was still asleep and we were out making pancakes and sausage because we wanted to have a special breakfast with her. She woke up and came walking out and she came up and she was eating and Bob said, ‘You must have woken up and wondered where you were and she said, ‘I thought I was having a dream’, and then she paused for a moment and said, ‘A good dream.’ So, I took her for a medical exam for the abuse and got more of her story and when I see those foster kids, it puts it in perspective how silly, like.... I have this reality check for what’s important. All the areas collide, but I realize, no I don’t need to take myself so seriously because there are children that are just in these horrible situation and that is humbling.

For Mia, the ability to raise her children in a safe and healthy environment was one of her primary internal goals for her family. She mentioned, “We have dreams of going overseas.” She added,

*Quality of life is more important than where we live. Living in a clean safe place. I think it’s worth it. Yes, I might not have a grand job, but I sit on my deck and I’m so happy. I have one bathroom and my roof leaks, but I walk to downtown. I can hike everyday if I want to. I love that, I love I don’t have to listen to a highway at night. I hear animals and I love that. Now we would like*
to have more money and do the kind of things we love to do like travel and go on vacation…

External Expectations

All of the women had external expectations they were focusing on within the family in addition to the aforementioned internal goals. For instance, although many of the family members of the women were supportive, there were often moments of pushback from the elder generation that reflected some of the societal gendered expectations the women had to combat. Mia noted, “I do get a lot of support from my parents and the older generations, but in some ways I get a lot of pushback. She reflected, Like I’ll never forget one of my mom’s friends who I adore, who’s like a second mom to me (she’s conservative, from a small town in SC). Right after I got married I went to Panama for a few days on a mission trip and she was like, ‘What’s your husband going to do, what’s he going to eat?’ And I was like, ‘When he gets up in the morning and crawls out of his cave he can hunt down a mastodon… and a couple people said that to me…. 

Some of the women also received feedback from the younger female family members. For Amy, one of the critical choices in her life was where to live following her PhD, since her husband had a flexible job. Although she was still adjuncting at this point, where she was going to move and whether or not she was going to accept a post-doc played an impact on the external expectations of her home sphere. Amy reflected that her older sister said, “Think about it, in two years Joy is going to be in kindergarten and then
what will you do. In two years, if you do a postdoc, then you’ll have to move again. At least this way you will be situated and it seems really great.” She said she ended up listening to her sister’s advice.

Jenny also received perspective from her younger sister.

It’s so funny, my sister, she’s an engineer, and she had a career and then she had children, and she’ll tell you right now she never wants to go back to work. Because her job was so high stressed, she didn’t enjoy it. She probably will be content to never go back. I don’t know if it’s because I came into motherhood saying I eventually want to go back, or what, but it’s just interesting to me how we are coming at the same things, maybe in a different order, but from a very different perspective. Eventually what is this (life) going to look like.

Eventually her children will be in school, eventually they will grow up.

All of the women had external and internal goals that affected their choices within the home. While they had dreams and goals for their children and the home sphere that did not necessarily involve their husbands, the role of the husband was a critical aspect of the home sphere.

**Influence of Male Partner**

Perhaps one of the most important findings of the study was the influence of the husband within the three spheres of home, work, and self. Within the home, although gendered expectations were present, all of the men shared responsibility to be involved in raising their children.
When the parents had young children, most often under the age of two, in addition to the women in the study feeling more angst and general confusion about whether or not to work, there appeared to be more of a struggle between the husband and wife. There was more of a conflict as they began to navigate changing the existing gender roles within the home. Most of the participant’s husbands began their time with young children maintaining societal gendered expectations, like expecting the wife to be the primary parent.

One heavy influence regarding domestic work division within the home was the importance of the husband’s job within their lives. For instance, for all of the women within the study, the husband was the “primary breadwinner”. This forced many of the family’s decisions, including the division of labor within the home, where the family lived, and so forth.

Another important factor of the division of labor was the amount of time the husband spent away from the home, working. If the husband either commuted, or worked intense shifts, then the mothers held more domestic responsibilities within the household. Mia commented that her husband often did not get home before Campbell’s bedtime, and was rarely home for a family dinner. The absence of the father in the home during Campbell’s wakeful hours played a significant factor on her husband’s ability to help within the household. For all of the participants, the father’s lack of presence within the house because of their jobs played a significant role of the division of labor in child rearing responsibilities. For instance, Jenny discussed the importance of her husband’s job in great detail. She recounted,
Now part of that goes into the fact that my husband job, he works for an electrical contractor, and their work, while it’s steady and he works 40 hours a week... last week he worked 107 hours. And, so, we figured out pretty quickly, even though I always wanted to stay home when they were little, we found out pretty quickly that one of us had to be The parent. Because his job.... When it’s up, it’s really, really busy. And so that was me. Because he was the one who was supporting us, and that was okay.

Amy had a similar dilemma in her home because her husband commuted out of state during the first few years after the birth of Joy. She said, “My husband works. He has a very busy job. He’s a consultant and he travels a lot. The first year I was completely at home with Joy; he was traveling every week. Every week he traveled. That was really awful. We knew we couldn’t keep doing this.” While he was out of town, Amy bore all of the familial responsibilities. For her, the concern was that when he began to work from home, which happened after Joy’s first birthday, she continued to take care of everything within the home. She said, “Up until he worked from home, he had a more stressful job, so it was fine the division of labor. I did the cooking, the cleaning, all that stuff. I never got upset.” Most of the women were comfortable with the division of labor when the husband’s job was the primary income. They were also okay with reshaping their career to work within the limitations of the husband’s job.

One common discussion in the interviews was that the women were in their present location because of the husband’s career and most likely would continue to live there indefinitely or move only because of the husband’s job. For example, when Mia and
I discussed where we lived she said. “If my husband had a great opportunity, we’d be moving.” She continued, “Now if he landed his dream job right now, then if he was in that, then it would be different. He’s not in his dream job so we would go. But if that were happening, it might be different.” Pam also lived in their small town because of her husband who had a job at the college before she became employed there. After they married, she also got a position at the college. Her position, however, was part-time while the husband had a full-time, paid job within the college. While she also mentioned she would be willing to move, she admitted they would most likely always live in their town for the remainder of their professional career. I also am in the same situation. Since my husband is a husband in a dental practice, I would have to figure out how to have an academic career within the parameters of our home location.

While most of the women said they would consider a move for their husband’s jobs, there were two women whose husband’s also considered a move for the advancement of her profession. While the moves had a predominant impact on the work sphere, the physical moving of the household played a role on the home. For Amy, she and her husband chose to move because of a future job opportunity that would allow Amy to advance in her academic career, although the desire to move came mostly from her husband. “I was like, okay, maybe, oh I didn’t want to move but I was like okay, all right, I’ll think about it”. The changing of the roles within the household brought a great deal of strife to the family dynamic.
While Amy and her husband chose to move because of her future job potential, the pressure to work part-time in addition to taking care of Joy had additional impacts on her marriage.

*Fall starts and nothing really changes, so this is when I got resentful. I was like ‘listen, you need to do more. You either need to take some mornings where you get her ready and you take her to school or you need to do more cooking, all of these things’. We had lots of conversations about caretaking.*

*At this point Mike was working from home. So, he’s in the house but not doing anything. I’m in the house, and I’m doing everything.*

Amy confided that the division of labor had been okay in the household up until this point, because she had been the primary caretaker. However, after the move, and Mike’s desire for her to take on a full-time working job, her resentment of the division within the household escalated. There was a great deal of tension evident in Amy’s exchanges, such as phone conversations and emails that relayed her frustrations with the division of labor between her and her husband. For example, I often noted a change in her tone when she discussed her frustrations with her husband. In the interview she added,

*This was like September, October of last year. This June, we will have been married for nine years, so for eight years, our relationship has been that I do the cooking, cleaning, all that stuff, and up until this point he’s had a more stressful job, so it was a fine division of labor, I never was upset about it, but now, I was like, no no, it’s not. I have a job that pays a good salary, and it’s demanding, and it pays our health insurance, and the whole reason why we’re*
in this city is because of my job. If I get fired for me job, there’s no reason for us to be here.

Most of the women acknowledged that the person who worked the most outside of the home should not be in charge of all of the internal household responsibilities as well. For Amy, this meant that her husband needed to do more within the home, since she also worked outside of the home. For the other participants, the flexibility for the women to work outside of the home, even if they were not the primary income earner, came when the men started doing more within the home sphere.

For many of the women, a turning point in their perspectives about juggling all of the spheres of their lives occurred after their husband began to contribute to child rearing responsibilities. While many of the men were unable to help out a great deal with the children, their ability to contribute in some ways to the domestic responsibilities played a major role on the mother’s happiness within the home sphere and their ability to also work outside of the home within academia.

One way that many of the men helped with child rearing was the bedtime routine. Many of the husbands would be in charge of bathing, changing, and putting the children to bed. I had many phone conversations with Pam and Mia while our husbands put the children to bed. The husband’s ability to take care of the night routine allowed the mother some freedom in her day while also allowing the husband to have some bonding time with the child. Although many of the men did not start out being in charge of the bedtime ritual, after they took on this role, the women felt more comfortable within the home sphere. However, there were some fathers who always actively put down their children,
at least on the weekends. Mia commented that her husband had always been involved in the bedtime routine since Campbell’s birth—at least when he “got home from work in time.” Pam also had a similar experience. In her interview she remarked that her husband had “always been the nighttime parent” for their daughter, Elizabeth, and for all of the foster children. She said, “He’s amazing. He’s always been the nighttime parent. We’ve been married for twenty years in May.”

My husband has also played a large part in the home. Some examples of how he has influenced the home sphere were: from the time Harper was born, he helped out during the night hours and he has always been the parent primarily in charge of bath and getting Harper ready for bed. One of the most helpful things that Jeremy has done to help in the home sphere is that he and a group of his friends who also have children have a Saturday morning daddy breakfast. This has allowed me time to catch up on schoolwork, grade papers, and so forth. While he works away from home and is unable to help during the day, he has been hands-on at night and on weekends, which has helped ease the angst of my domestic responsibilities within the home. For some of the women, their husbands were also able to help out some during the day.

Jenny commented that often her husband would be in charge of picking up the children from school when they were sick, although Jenny admitted it was often she who had to arrange for childcare. Amy, who spent the most time of the interview discussing the role of the husband within the home, talked about how Mike helping out within the home changed their relationship for the better and allowed her to also work outside of the home. She said,
So there was lots of anger building up. So I was like you need to do more. So that’s when this semester... it’s been better because I teach at night and he’s forced to help. On Monday and Wednesday he ends at 5:00 and then he takes over. He does dinner for Joy, he cooks, he cleans, he gives her a bath, he puts her to bed, and he does everything. And even though I end class at 7:00, I stay and work. A lot of times I also will go exercise and do something, I’ll go run, so he’s forced to take care of her for those two nights, and it’s been amazing—it’s been so much better.

Later in the interview she added,

And on Friday’s, he picks her up for lunchtime, so I can work straight from 8:00-2:00. So, it’s been so much better, I would say it took a solid six months of adjustment, but I would say it’s been so much better because it’s been forced. You know what I mean? Now, it’s better. I mean way better. I will say this, in the defense of dinner, I’m PhD in nutrition. I really don’t want my husband cooking because I’m a control freak about the food, so in his defense, I don’t really want him cooking. So when it comes to that type of household thing, it was more Joy.

Amy continued to talk about how having Mike home, and how him being involved in the household, had a positive impact on her academic career, her role as a wife and a mother, and her ability to work outside the home. She concluded,

So now I would say it’s definitely better but it’s been a big adjustment for our marriage and for us, but now it’s much better, and I’ll say this, Joy and Mike
are now way closer. You know, because he picks her up for lunch, he does do bath time and nap two nights a week. So right now he’s not with us, it’s not like he’s going to take vacation to stare at the wall during spring break, but Joy will say, ‘When are we going to go see daddy?’ Their relationship is closer because he works from home. Even when he works all day, he’s still done at 5:00, and even if he’s going to work later, it’s still nice he can just walk out. He’s just there.

Even though Mike and Amy had a bit of trouble figuring out how to navigate the home sphere and the division of labor, once they were able to communicate and change the preexisting gender roles, they were able to work together to make juggling home, work and self easier for both of them.

One interesting aspect about the partner’s impact on the home sphere was their willingness to ultimately bend the gender roles. This sentiment was brought forth as Pam explained, “You have to have somebody who is willing to be in a nontraditional gender role. They have to be supportive but on the flipside, because they are the ones that get up. Part of them has to be traditional but part of it is nontraditional. There are some great guys out there.” For most of the men, the first aspect of bending the gender roles came when they took on more domestic responsibilities around the house, like cooking, cleaning, giving the children baths, putting them to bed and so forth. However, there were other ways that the men began to break down the societal expectations of our culture that revolve around the home sphere. For example, many of the women talked about how
their husbands supported their dreams and goals, which ultimately allowed the women to pursue academic careers within the work sphere.

Mia talked about how her husband was the one who often sacrificed for her, instead of the other way around. She noted, “We tend to do things that I want. He tends to sacrifice for me, I’m going back to school, and it’s my passion and all that stuff. He says he’s fine with that. He doesn’t have that avocation. He says all I ever wanted was to be a good dad, have a family, and have a great job. I’m so thankful for that. What if I married somebody that was like me, it would be insane.” While Mia appreciated the fact that her husband put her aspirations first, she recognized that a great deal of guilt came from this sacrifice. Like Amy, she felt the sacrifice of leaving her children and them spending more time with their fathers, was in fact a blessing. Mia added,

I do still feel guilt, I do still feel, not as strongly because my husband and I have a really good agreement and bond over my writing, but I do feel guilty about taking time away from him and from Campbell. When I’m here and I have to be like… he’s the one who says don’t worry about me, I’ll be fine. You’ve got your school and you’re writing. It’s only three years, don’t worry about me.

Mia felt that going back to school to get her MFA in creative writing in Vermont was important to her family, and it was important for her husband to be more hands on with Campbell, but it did take a toll on her emotions. Later she reasoned,

But part of me was like, you know, I want to see how he handles it. I mean, I’m home with her all day. And he did… on the second day he called and said
'I’m now seeing what you’re days are like.’ The husbands are with them for an hour a day, and I’m not blaming them for that, but it’s different because it’s long and it’s hard. We tried, forever, to talk about it. I was like, listen, don’t think for a minute that I don’t think you’re working hard and busting your tail at work, but you have to understand how different it is. You are not 100% responsible for somebody else for the entire day. If you need to go, to run to the bathroom or run to the store, or go get lunch, whatever...you’re still working hard but you can do those things. It’s just different and it’s just hard. And I wouldn’t change it for the world, but it’s not just a physical thing, it’s a mental thing. You know, you’re a mom. That’s hard to explain.

By her husband taking on some of the responsibilities within the home, they both could grow in their relationship as they learned to co-parent.

All of the men came from similar backgrounds with their mothers, which most likely had an influence on their ability to transition from the expected norms to a role of shared domestic responsibility within the home. For instance, of all five women I interviewed, including myself, our husband’s mother worked outside of the home. Jenny commented,

My husband, it’s so funny, when I grew up, the whole time we were home until we went to college, my mom was home. My husband grew up in a house where his mother worked outside the home from the time before he was born. So, this whole stay at home mom thing to me, I mean he was so supportive, I mean he never, even now, If I decided I did not want to have a job, he would be fine.
But going back to work, he always had the attitude, if that is what makes you happy, we will make it work. He never was with the attitude that you can’t do it anymore, it was always we will make it work was the attitude.

Perhaps them watching their mother worked changed their perspective about women’s roles inside and outside of the home.

The age of the participant’s husband also seemed to have an effect on their gendered perspectives. Just as the women seemed more comfortable in how they navigated the separate spheres of their lives as they transitioned from their twenties to their thirties and forties, and as their children aged, so too did the men’s perspective as they got older. Mia remarked on this. She said, “My husband’s older than me. He’s nine and a half years older than me. It’s interesting to see his perspective. My husband went to college in the late 1980s and that was a time of a crazy shift in culture. His parents were progressive. We when got married, he was older. He thought the perspective of me as a mastodon was hilarious.” Mia added, “I think only eighty year old men should think like that. Even my dad. It’s good for them to be alone sometimes to get perspective.”

For all of the women, they felt that the presence of a supportive husband was the key to their ability to juggle the three interlocking spheres of home, work and self. Mia summed it up nicely when she reflected, “I know if I didn’t have my husband as the man and the kind person he is, I couldn’t do what I’m doing. If I didn’t have a true husband who was 100% supportive, if he wasn’t, I wouldn’t be able to do it. I think everyone is not that lucky.” As I sat in Mia’s living room, I observed the numerous pictures of Mia and her husband on their walls. I also noted the presence of notes from him to Mia that
scattered the room. Pam echoed that sentiment when she ended her interview by saying, “I think the theme of supportive husbands is rich, something worth digging into.”

Amy closed her interview by also reflecting on the importance of a supportive husband. She said,

*The husband plays a huge part. It makes a difference, if you have a husband who is a breadwinner and he can’t move, your options are limited, or you have to figure out other outlets. My husband has always been very supportive of my career. He quit his job...when I got into graduate school, so he’s always been very supportive. It’s tricky when he’s been supportive, well, it gets tricky. It’s easy to be supportive when it doesn’t change your day to day, but when it actually impacts you, it’s harder to be supportive. In theory, things sound great, but...If I have to wake up early and take care of Joy, then...*

It seemed that the husbands of all of the participants were very supportive of the women’s goals outside of the home, and while they did bend traditional roles, there was still a hint of resistance we all worked through. Another example of this came later in the interview with Amy. She said,

*He travels probably once a month and that is an adjustment, so he’s gotten better about telling me and also, do you want me to ask the sitter or do you want to ask the sitter to see if she can sit Wednesday night, and I said I’d call, it’s not that I mind calling, I just want to have the conversation. I want to have the dialogue and the recognition, which is probably very female.*
When the men were able to break out of the traditional gender roles, even if it was only in small aspects of the home sphere, like putting the children to sleep, the women became happier and could more easily leave the house to also pursue professional careers.

One area that loomed in the forefront for many of the women that did confine them to traditional gender roles was how the participants talked about how they would also be taking care of their aging parents in the near future. While the men were very helpful with raising their own children, few discussed how their husband would also play a role in taking care of the elder generation. For some of the women, the weight of having to also take care of them was a responsibility that, while they accepted it, was going to take a toll on how they managed the home sphere. Mia commented, “Since my husband is nine and a half years older than me, his parents are in their 70s and they are not super healthy.” Pam also discussed the future with her parents.

Recently, my parents divorced after forty-five years of marriage, so that’s been interesting. They are both helpful in their own way, but they also need help in their own way, too. When I think about needing to simplify my life in the future, with my mom I’m starting to see more fragileness and it is more difficult now because I’ll be taking care of them in separate homes. I think some of that will start sooner, so I see that on the horizon.

Since the women were not taking care of their aging parents yet, perhaps the men would continue to be active parents and support their parents within the home sphere.
Narrative Elements

The importance of the story emerged as the women told their tales regarding live within the home sphere. For instance, as the women spoke about their home life and home routine, many different themes emerged that warranted examination. Further, the use of narrative elements, such as the metaphor, allowed the women to speak in storied form as they expressed the sentiments of navigating their lives.

Within the analysis, there were some striking ideas that repeatedly occurred throughout the narratives. The two most common themes that intersected all of the spheres were that a mother could “do it all, but not at one time” and that we had to constantly “figure it out.” Within the home sphere, the themes often revolved around the time commonplace.

The most common complaint from the women about the home sphere was simply that they did not have enough time to get everything finished. Whether it was laundry, dinner, or trying to be an active mother, the women often felt there was not enough time in the day to be all they wanted to be to all family members. Jenny noted, “That you can’t do it all is a really hard thing to learn. You think, yes you can, but it’s really hard.” Additionally, since the women often talked about how each aspect of the child’s life was just a stage, there was a constant trial to “figure it out” before the next stage of life occurred that complicated things all over again. The women often talked about how motherhood was a journey that needed to be navigated. Pam noted, “It’s really hard to do it all. There’s part of me that wants to be just a mom but I want to contribute back with a job and being mentally available. It’s hard because you do want to figure out a way to
make it happen.” While the women tried to “figure it out” in all areas of their lives, the time restraints appeared to be the most evident in this sphere.

Within the home sphere, there were many metaphors present that reflected the common themes. The most common metaphor within this sphere was that the women, while they wanted to be primarily home with their children, did not want to “sacrifice their work on the altar of their children,” and vice versa. While the women wanted to be a part of their children’s lives, they could not see just staying home with them and not working at all. Even though this metaphor appeared in various forms throughout the interviews, Jenny summed it up nicely when she admitted,

For a long time, I felt like I had sacrificed my career on the altar of my children. I said, okay, I want to get my degrees and then stay at home with my children when they were little, but then when it was actually happening, it was hard when you have three little children because I had two in one year—two children 11 months apart. So my daughters turned five and four right after my son was born. I wouldn’t have wanted to have been anywhere else, and I never played the martyr... poor me I’m so smart and have all these degrees and I’m stuck here with my children instead, but I would have said, I don’t have a career.

In addition to the elements of story that were important to the analysis, such as common themes and metaphors, the critical components of narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place were critical in all of the spheres as well.
Temporality was a crucial aspect of the narrative inquiry. Temporality is defined as the relationship of the study to time; specifically in the home sphere, it is important to examine how the past affects the future. Within the home sphere, the most important element to temporality was how the women felt more comfortable with their choices as they, and their children, aged. For instance, Jenny said,

_I thought I’d be ruling the world by now. The voice inside myself says, what’s wrong with you, why are you not ruling the world? Because I’ve had a certain number of years and I think, okay, you need to get with the program. Um, but to step back, I guess I didn’t realize the sacrifice. There has to be a sacrifice somewhere. When I thought about it, I wanted to be a stay at home mom. But when I think okay, if I have this job, what does it do to my family, and I’m not willing to give up my family. I like the fact that my children like to be with me. I mean yeah, they know that I’m busy at times, and they are okay with it, they are really understanding, but you know, I don’t want to have to tell them, I’m sorry your life is forever changed because I made this decision. I’m happy with my decisions._

Jenny found comfort in her decisions. Looking back, she realized that her life looked different than what she thought it would, but she realized that the choices she made for her family were the best choices she could make. Sociality is the second element of the narrative inquiry that was important to the analysis.

Sociality is the tendency to socialize and form social groups. In the home sphere, most of the women acknowledged the lack of socialization. In fact, often the women
talked about how they felt isolated from the outside world. The women, however, did identify themselves first as mothers and second as contingent faculty. Our conversations about the home sphere allowed them to talk with another, similar mother, in order to form connections. Their place within the home sphere and their role as mothers heavily influenced the narrative inquiry.

Finally, place is where the narrative occurs. It is important to first note that two of the interviews occurred within the home and two of the interviews occurred within the work sphere. However, all of the interviews about the home sphere reflected the place of the home for the women. The home was where women identified as mothers. Even when the women met me in their work environment, it seemed the conversation revolved around their home space as opposed to the physical space of the office where we sat.

The home sphere played a significant role in the women’s perceptions about their lives; a review of the transcript shows most of the interviews focused on this sphere. Within this particular domain, there were a few categories of major findings. Specifically, a great deal of the study’s results revolved around: the women’s backgrounds; how they measured support; their lack of time; the gendered expectations placed on them; and the influence of their male husbands. The elements of storytelling, such as the metaphor that the women did not want to sacrifice their children on the altar of their careers, reflected the major findings through the use of narrative inquiry.
Work

Second to the home sphere, the work sphere was the second most discussed sphere during the participant interviews. From the discussions, it was apparent that all of the women loved teaching and being in academia. In fact, even though the women acknowledged that they put being a mother first, they all talked about how working was a good emotional outlet from the tedium and strain from being a stay-at-home mom. The major themes of the work sphere included the significance of the women’s background, influences and aspirations, how the women managed their time within the work sphere, the support they felt they did or did not get from their academic peers, the significance of internal and external expectations, and the influence of their husband and their male peers. The most significant metaphor in the narrative inquiry was that working allowed “nourishment” for the women. Working often satisfied their intellectual cravings. For all of the women, they knew that working in academia was going to be a part of their life—even if it was going to be on a part-time basis.

Professional Background

Like the home sphere, the mother’s background influences affected her present situation. In terms of her work career, a woman’s professional background affected where she was academically, and her goals for future employment. Of the five women I interviewed, all of the women had Master’s degrees. I noted many of the women’s accolades through their resumes and vitas. By the end of the interview semester, Mia had an additional masters degree in creative writing. Pam had two masters’ degrees. Jenny
held masters and was considering going back for her PhD. Amy had a PhD and I will have a PhD by the end fall 2012. Clearly, all of the women were driven academically. While the women were only working part-time, we all had strong academic backgrounds.

Mia had a Masters in English from a small college in the southeast, but she was also working on completing her masters in creative writing. Further, in addition to completing her MFA in creative writing this semester, Mia recently signed with a publishing company for her first novel. I was able to read the unpublished manuscript during the semester and saw a revised copy of the finished copy at the end of the interview period. Additionally, Mia adjuncted English courses at her local four-year college. While she enjoyed all of her academic pursuits, Mia admitted, “Three courses in the fall, with Campbell and everything, it was rough, it was the roughest semester I’ve had yet teaching and I’ve been teaching in higher education since 2004, but it was the hardest semester.” Like Mia, many of the other participants were juggling a lot of academic aspirations.

Pam was originally hired at her small Christian college to run the writing center part-time. About a year into her job, she was asked to also teach English courses. Outside of the college campus, Pam also wrote parenting articles for a website that was turned into a print magazine, that she also edited for a period of time. I observed the articles through the internet. Some of her articles about managing toddlers, and potty training got syndicated in other magazines. Pam laughed, “That’s on my resume! One of my interviews opened up with a question about letting your children run around naked! It’s pretty hilarious.” Pam had a Masters in English from another small, Christian college and
a double Master’s in higher education with a concentration in adult learners from a small private liberal arts college. Additionally, she just finished an additional eighteen hours of Masters level work in composition. Pam mostly teaches the introductory English course during the spring semester. While Pam loved working at her school, she has recently accepted another position at a local community college, which she began in the fall of 2012. She felt she had to leave her college because of the many setbacks at the college, and because “the college that I was committed to is no longer there”. For instance, in order to get out of financial trouble, the college “added courses to our load but we lost our retention committee and the provost was adding duties and advising. I knew I wouldn’t be successful because I would have so many jobs.” The problems with the small college were evident during the semester. For example, an article in the local newspaper on May 10th discussed the continued cuts of programs on the college campus.

Like Mia and Pam, I also had a Master’s degree in English. In addition to working on completing my doctorate in higher education, I also taught English at two small, private, liberal arts colleges located about an hour away from my hometown. I drove four days a week, for at least two hours, to teach two sections of the introductory English courses. I am scheduled to complete the doctorate fall 2012.

Amy also had a PhD from a large, research university located in the south in nutrition. She explained, “I went for my undergraduate degree, worked for two years, received my masters in public health, worked for six to seven years in various health departments across the Midwest, then got my PhD.” She remarked. “Just like you, I did comps in June, and defended my proposal February 8th. Joy was born February 23rd. I
worked on my dissertation while I had Joy.” She continued on, “I had a CDC dissertation award. Joy turned one on February 23rd and I defended that award on April 15th, so that was a year and two months. I was completely stay at home with Joy from April 2010 to April 2011, although I was receiving a paycheck from the award.” After that time, Amy admitted she did not want to take another postdoc because she and her husband did not want to have to move after that time. Although Amy interviewed at many universities, she decided to take a job at a college located close to her family that had growth potential. Amy taught online classes on Monday and Wednesday nights so she could spend the majority of her time with her young child, Joy.

Jenny had a Masters in biology. She worked part-time as the lab and safety coordinator and the science fair director of her small, Christian college. Also, she was an adjunct for multiple sections of Biology and ran the corresponding labs. She adjuncted the courses for many years. Jenny noted, “I started adjuncting when my oldest child was about six months old. It’s been a strange progression. When he was six months old I started adjuncting for an adult evening class. I did that for two and a half years whenever they needed me to teach a class. I would come in and do it.”

Many of the women admitted that while they had strong future academic goals, working part-time was the best way for them to manage the various competing factors of time. Like within the home sphere, how the women managed their time played a key role in their present circumstances. It seemed the women felt working part-time was the only way to intersect their work and home life, while their children were young, although they
all planned on working more once their children either started kindergarten, or later on in their child’s life.

   Even though the women worked more than part-time hours for their colleges, they all chose to adjunct classes as contingent faculty. This allowed them the freedom to be home more with their children, while also allowing them to work outside of the home. The women all talked about their passion to teach and how they loved being in the classroom, even if it was on a part-time basis. However, the decision to work on a part-time basis did lead to some complications within the intersecting spheres of home, work and self.

Complications with Intersection of Spheres

Amy’s husband wanted her to go to work full-time so that they could have more money and that he could have more flexibility within his job. She confessed, “This was a very bad time in our marriage. It was very stressful. So from this year, Joy age from year one to year two was a really stressful time because I was like, I don’t see how I can be working, I do everything at the house, I pay all the bills, I do all the cooking, the cleaning, taking care of Joy, so I don’t see how me working full-time is good for anybody. I don’t see how this is going to work.” Later, she confessed she tried to make it work better for her family when she continued, “So I thought, maybe this is better for my family, there won’t be as much pressure on my husband because at this point we were fighting all the time.” As previously noted, much of this tension appeared in email exchanges, phone conversations, and from personal observation data.
None of the women were comfortable with the idea of being away from their home on a full-time schedule. Their strong stances on this subject were evident throughout all the transcripts. Mia started, “I’m not interested in getting a job that would keep me away from my child all day. It would be very hard to do a nine to six.” Allison echoed this sentiment when she noted, “I had a really hard time with the idea of working part-time. Hands down, I had a really hard time because, like most moms are, I was crazy attached to my kid and in that moment I couldn’t imagine leaving her—she was only two—I couldn’t imagine leaving her.”

I also had strong, negative feelings about the possibility of leaving Harper, and now Beckett on a full-time basis. In my journal on February 22nd I wrote, “Sometimes I see job descriptions of things I would like to apply to, but then I think, there’s just no way—no way am I going to leave my babies right now.” During the interview with Jenny, when we talked about leaving our children I said, “I just love being with my children so much, I wouldn’t dream of leaving them. I would love to work on a more full-time basis when they get older, but for now, I just couldn’t do it.” Jenny added additional insight into the part-time requirements. She said,

My department chair wanted to hire me full-time, but for many years I didn’t want to work full-time. So, for many years he didn’t ask for the school to create a position for full-time because he knew I wouldn’t take it. So, there have been other opportunities at schools that were kind of close, they were hiring full-time, that I was more than qualified for, and I might have liked to
apply for them, but I didn’t. When my children were young I did not want a full-time job.

Jenny continued,

But I can also say when we started talking about the possibility of me working more or even at all, I was very excited about the possibility because I love to teach. I feel really excited when I come out of a classroom, not in a bad way, you know, I just feel like that’s where I belong. I’m being able to use my gifts and that’s a really great thing to do, and I feel like I’m a better mom and wife because instead of needy myself, I don’t feel so empty, because it reenergized me to be in the classroom.

All of the women reiterated why they chose to work; for all of us, we love to teach and we love to keep ourselves intellectually stimulated. Amy said, “The class lets me have intellectual conversations. It lets me think about things that are different than just having a baby. I like to use my brain in different capacities. Plus, having a kid is exhausting. They are very tiring and I need that… I need a break from that.” Jenny noted, “Even though I had been a stay at home mom, I knew I needed something to do with my brain and my degree and I knew I enjoyed teaching, so it was something to do with my brain and my degree and I knew I enjoyed teaching.” I had the opportunity to observe Mia in the classroom setting at the beginning of the semester. Her passion and excitement for teaching was obvious to me and to the students that surrounded her.

Many similar sentiments echoed throughout all of the narratives. Pam talked about how teaching worked within her short term and long term goals. “My working
rekindled a passion for teaching and also there was a lot of good mental food in composition and rhetoric. The good stuff that makes you realize there is more than just the mundane of the everyday.”

Amy made a statement about the need to stay in the work force, even on a part-time basis, while working towards her ultimate career goals. She noted,

*What I wanted was to do a part-time post doc, because I didn’t want to completely take myself out of the workforce because I had seen enough women who had completely removed themselves from the workforce---that is a bad----then their kids were school and it’s really hard to get back in, especially in academia. They say you can get back in, but you can’t. I mean, this is just my opinion. So I don’t want to remove myself from academia and I love academia. So I said, I really want part-time because I thought if I did a part-time post doc for two years, then I could go full-time, but it was a square peg in a round whole. I was doing research I didn’t really know what to do. That’s why I decided to take the part-time position at my present college.*

**Future Goals in the Work Sphere**

In order to look towards the future as a mother who also works in academia, we talked about our future goals within the work sphere. Some of the women were perfectly content working on a part-time basis indefinitely, like Pam and Mia. Others, like Amy and Jenny, saw full-time, possibly tenured positions, later on in their academic careers. I
would like to work full-time in the future, although I might work in a more administrative position rather than work towards tenure.

Pam, whose oldest biological child is in middle school, admitted she wanted to be available to her children and her foster children more than she desired aspiring for a future full-time position. “My goals are built off passion.” She said,

I don’t know where we’ll go w/ foster parenting, I don’t think we can do two kids again, and I have mixed feelings because Helen needs me a lot. It’s really interesting because she wants space and to be independent but she’s climbing into bed with me. She needs that quality time. It goes back and forth but either way they need you present, so that’s my largest concern, moving foreword. Being emotionally present and the time it takes to be emotionally present. I think people assume at middle school it’s time to restart your career, but I’m not committed to that. The blend of trying to keep yourself intellectually engaged and happy and being with your kids on the floor and volunteering in the classroom, it’s stuff you need to do. It’s tough, it’s really tough.

Like Pam, Mia felt she would be able to give up a full-time teaching goal in her future, but she did have other academic goals that were very important to her. She started the interview by saying, “I would want to be on a tenure track if I could get it. Not many creative writing professors are on tenure track. They’re full-time but most people just have the MFA. Even though the MFA is considered a terminal degree, they are not always on the tenure track. But, you know, I’m not as gung-ho about it as I was before I had Campbell.” She added, “The publishing of my book is a big deal. It’s not this is a
huge publishing house and not that it’s going to be a best seller, but it’s a big deal. I’m finally starting to realize that…this is my passion. This is what I want to do with the rest of my life.” Finally, she ended by saying,

I don’t know if I would be okay with giving up my academic dreams but, if all the puzzles fit together and I was able to publish and I was satisfied with my writing, then I could give it up and teach part-time every once in awhile; if I died tomorrow and had not published a book, I would be totally unsatisfied. That has not changed a bit. Now, my academic goals, those have adjusted a little. Yeah, they have changed. I am not nearly as… it won’t kill me if I’m not a full-time professor.

Unlike Pam and Mia who were comfortable with the reshaping of their career goals since motherhood, Amy and Jenny had full-time higher education goals they plan to work when their children are old enough to go to school. Amy said that her goal was to become tenured.

The long term career goal? Tenure, yes but I’m not going to kill myself for it. That’s what I will say. I don’t take time away from my daughter for me to advance in my career early. You know, my commitment is that I’m always with my daughter in the afternoon after her nap and I’m not going to change that commitment. It’s not worth it for me. Especially because I only have two more years until she goes to kindergarten. So in two years she’ll be in school all day.
Amy’s future career goals certainly changed after the birth of Joy, even though she does look towards a full-time job in her future. Amy commented,

*Goals changed since Joy. Professionally, especially going to the school where I got my PhD. It was very tense, lots of egos. If I didn’t have Joy, I would have taken a position at Hopkins and I would have been like, I’m going to have this great career, a great researcher, but having Joy, I was like, it’s not worth it. That high-high level where you work all the time and try to be this well known researcher, and I’m like, it’s fine. My papers can be in low-level journals for the rest of my career, and it’s fine. Before, my ego was more tied up, the papers, the university where I was, and now I’m like, I’m fine. That changed. But I’ll still say, there are still moments where you’ll see this great job posted somewhere and I’ll be like, ooh, but then I’m like, no Amy, get real, you don’t want to work that hard and you want to be with your daughter.*

While Amy was not be applying at larger institutions, nor was she worried about where she planned on publishing, she did still plan on publishing and she did plan on becoming tenured. I was able to see some of her published work and grants during the semester. Her goals certainly changed since Joy, but she still has goals to work full-time outside of the home. Jenny also had plans on going back to work. Although she was not interested in publishing or tenure, she did plan on working full-time at her institution in the near future. She also wanted to expand her own academic qualifications.

Jenny planned on going back to school in order to expand her future career options. Going back to school was always a goal of hers. In fact, the goal of going back
to school started when she was young with a small child at home, and another child on the way. As we talked about my experiences in academia and completing the dissertation with two young children, she reminisced about when she was in a similar situation.

I was in my late twenties with little children. I was twenty-five when I had my oldest child. I can tell something’s are just your age. Having little children is hard. I mean, it is hard. I don’t know, I remember being there. I had a home business and even though I was home with them all the time, there was a level of stress. I can relate to that. I remember those feelings. It is interesting to think about your whole interaction in academia, but I can’t imagine. I was working on my PhD when I was pregnant with my daughter. I had her in March; my major advisor said I want you to have the summer off. In July, I was pretty sure I wanted to stay home with her, but we did not know until the end of my first trimester that I was then pregnant with the second baby. I had already told him I was not coming back. My husband was like, are you sure you don’t want to go back because he did not think I could cut it as a stay at home mom. I think he thought, ‘she’s very driven, she’s very task oriented and achievement oriented and how is this going to work for her’. It was not an unfair thing for him to be concerned about because he knew me well, he kept saying, we can make it work. If you want to continue school, we will make it work. We decided not to, but I’ve often thought how would that work. Physically I would not have cut it. Physically, your hormones do crazy things, your body does crazy things—so I never really thought about it. As I’ve gotten
older, but I remember people would talk about, I’m so busy, (as a stay at home mom) and as a college student I would think, what’s your problem? You obviously need to manage your time better. So now there is an element of time management, but I understand it better. Sadly, men who complain about these things don’t get my sympathy because I think, you are married, what is wrong with you, you have a wife. That’s just my opinion.

She then continued that she now goes back and forth between finishing a PhD in science, and getting another degree, like in educational leadership. While she was still not sure what she wanted to do, she knew that she wanted to go back to school in the future.

Additionally, Jenny recently approved the college creating a full-time position for her. She remarked, “I have recently picked up more hours. As we speak, the board of directors is approving a job for me to become a full-time instructor. My goal, ultimately is to have a professor position, with full-time instructors, and that was always my goal.” Jenny realized, as her children get older, she was ready to begin thinking about working on a more full-time basis.

During Jenny’s interview, she recounted a conversation she had with one of her young children about working part-time. She declared that we often need to listen to the wisdom of our young daughters, and in fact, learn a few lessons about life from them. For Jenny, the realization was that it was okay to work part-time, and even if she aspired to something else in the future, working part-time was not a failure. It was the best for her as a mother with young children, and in fact, could be a goal for her daughter in the future.
My daughter does not want to be a professor, but she wants to be a teacher
and she said, and I would have never said this, because I was so different
when I was her age, I needed to be the best and I want you to know that I’m
the best, but she was like, ‘I think I want to be a part-time teacher.’ I said,
well, college teachers are part-time. In public schools, I’ve heard of some
part-time, maybe substitute, and honestly there are three day a week
preschools. I said, so you can do that---I just laughed. The whole conversation
was so funny to me because I was like, what is wrong with you! But at the
same time I thought, you know, ... when I am home all week I think I did not
appreciate being a stay at home mom like I should have, of course it’s
different now, but it was more the pace of my life. I was in complete control of
my schedule. I loved spring break because I could think, ‘I’m going to sweep
the porch, then I’m going to read’, and I thought, I didn’t appreciate this as
much as I do now. And I told myself, this is only for a season, it will not
always we this way so I need to enjoy myself now. Of course, you have rosy
glasses, I remember the good moments, but I never ever remember saying, I
just want to work part-time for the rest of my life. Maybe for a short time
when I started working here, but I want to have a say in what the students are
doing, and I think I have good ideas and something to offer, but it just blew
me away that my daughter is already planning to work part-time. But this is
also the child who has already declared she will not have a baby, she will
adopt her children, because she has heard too many stories about childbirth.
And so, I look at that, and I think, that’s so different than me. Just talking to you makes me remember I need to not tell her she’s has to have a full-time job. She doesn’t have to have a full-time job, she probably has more realistic expectations that I do.

After the recount, Jenny proudly showed me a picture of her daughter and continued to praise her characteristics as an innocent young woman.

My goals were somewhere between the two spectrums. I was completing my dissertation in hopes of graduating in the near future while I also worked as a contingent faculty member at two local four-year colleges. In addition, I was home full-time with two children under the age of three. While, like Amy, I often saw job descriptions I would love to apply for, I knew that it was not the time in my life to be pursuing a full-time job. For instance, on February 14th, I received an email regarding a full-time position starting in August of 2012. Although I wanted to apply for the position, I knew the timing was unrealistic. However, I would like to work on a more full-time basis in the future. I hoped having the degree would open up potential full-time jobs in the future. However, I was okay with working part-time as a contingent faculty member in order to balance my passion to be in academia with my desire to be home with my children. As I spoke to Jenny I recounted

Yeah, I thought I’d be ruling the world by now. Both spectrums might not be so great, we need to meet somewhere in the middle. It doesn’t mean her meaning or value is diminished in anyway, I have to remember that myself. The voice inside myself is, what’s wrong with you, why are you not ruling the
world? Because I’ve had a certain number of years and I think, okay, you need to get with the program. Um, but to step back, I guess I didn’t realize the sacrifice. There has to be a sacrifice somewhere. When I thought about it, I wanted to be a stay at home mom. But when I think okay, if I have this job, what does it do to my family, and I’m not willing to give up my family. I like the fact that my children like to be with me. I mean yeah, they know that I’m busy at times, and they are okay with it, they are really understanding, but you know, I don’t want to have to tell them, I’m sorry your life is forever changed because I made this decision. And to me, I think it would be different, too, if it became a need of your dad has lost his job and for you to be able to eat I need to do this, but you know, in our case, it’s oh, I would like to do this. You know, it isn’t that oh, I’m sorry there is no food, it’s oh I’m sorry, we don’t have your college fund. Those kinds of things, we can worry about later, maybe next year.

Need for Support

In order to balance the interlocking spheres of home, work and self, the women looked for support from others. In the home sphere, the women looked for support with raising their children, in the self-sphere they looked for support from their friends. However, within the work sphere, the women looked for the support within their institution and the people who made up its structure.
One alarming finding in the study was that the women felt they did not receive much support for balancing raising young children while being a contingent faculty member within their academic institution. Mia spoke openly about her distaste for the lack of support specifically for contingent faculty members within the academe.

Mia talked bluntly about her opinions or the lack of support for contingent members regarding their status as mothers with young children. She said, “The lack of support at the college level, with motherhood, there is no support and it is not going to change. None.” She continued, “There still is a lack of support. There is no childcare, there is no…most of the schools don’t have the mentor groups. There is not a community driven anything, and I still think they’re should be, but I feel okay. But an adjunct, I just feel like, you’re leftovers. You are the red-headed stepchild. You are just used and abused.” An investigation of the college’s website confirmed Mia’s opinions. As of now, there are no support groups for women, or childcare available to part-time faculty.

Following this dialogue, Mia and I spoke about a particular incident of the semester that affected both of our jobs at the local college.

As Mia and I spoke about our similar experiences at one of the colleges where we both are contingent faculty, we realized we both had been asked to teach a particular section of an introductory English course during the spring semester. While the college usually did not hire contingent faculty for the spring semester, the department chair called both of us about taking the instructor position. Mia started, “They called me a couple of weeks into January and said, hey, can you teach this class? But it wasn’t worth it. It was at 1:00. It’s not fiscally sound. I would have to hire a babysitter or get a babysitter to pick
her up from school.” I, Katie, realized, “I got that call, too. I was like, I’m sorry, I can’t do it. I would spend more on gas and what would I do with Harper.” Following the interview I looked back in my reflective journal and realized I had written an entry about the situation. On January 13th I wrote: “Had to turn down a job today. I really wish I could take it but it doesn’t make sense. I can’t afford the drive three days a week, two hours each way, for an $1800.00 class. Plus, what would I do with Harper? How often do colleges call out of the blue and offer jobs? Especially in this economy? It’s the price I pay. Today reminded me of those sacrifices.” Both Mia and myself realized the sacrifices we had to make in order to put our children in front of the last minute pinches of our local college. After the discussion Mia said her husband told her that she was more loyal to the college than the college would ever be to her. I think we both had to learn that lesson.

Later in the interview Mia and I talked about the current absence of low paying contingent faculty jobs within academia. I reiterated her point by expressing, “I think what’s happening is that colleges are making their full-time employees work even harder, so now you not only are at the bottom of the barrel, but you can’t even find a job.” Mia then discussed her current feelings toward the college and their lack of job opportunities.

*The adjunct thing. That was disappointing to see there were no opportunities. I wanted to be like, ‘you people are crazy’. At big colleges, TAs are teaching the freshman introductory classes. You could hire me full-time, pay me like $35,000 a year, and I could teach creative writing and all of your comp classes. You need to think outside of the box. You know, I’m a good teacher, my evaluations are great, I want to be like what are you thinking. So I am*
hoping when I have the publication and the MFA. I don’t expect either of them to get me a job, but hopefully it will help.

Sadly, however, Mia realized there were still not many opportunities at this particular college. As she looked back on her last semester at the college, she recalled a conversation she had with the department chair regarding future employment.

_It was tiring at the college. You know, where you’re an adjunct, you’re in and out. And since I have so much going on at home, I just didn’t have as much to give. I used to volunteer. For the first two or three years I worked there, I was also an academic counselor. I worked at night. But now, I leave. I have to because I have to pick her up. Sometimes I would come in early. The college has asked me which classes suited me best, which has been great. The college has been great that way. But the dean and I had a conversation when I was applying to graduate schools. I wanted to see how she thought I was doing. She said ‘great’. I asked her point blank, ‘You know I’m getting this degree, what do you think the opportunities are here?’ and she said, unfortunately there are not any here. They don’t have the money to hire more than one writing professor. He’s in his 40s, so until he leaves, there is no opportunity._

Many of the other women also discussed openly their feelings of the lack of support for women who are mothers within academia. Pam, for instance, mentioned that the department chair was assigning more teaching jobs to the full-time instructors. She showed me emails from her college that reflected the increase in workload for already
staffed faculty. This, combined with other factors, was what led Pam to apply for other positions away from the college.

**Differences Among Types of Institutions**

Some of the women, like Pam, admitted they had either worked at or were going to work in a community college setting as a contingent faculty member in order to combat the lack of support. Although Pam liked working on the four-year college campus better, she had to make a sacrifice of her place of employment in order to combine her work and home sphere with motherhood. However, some of the women like Jenny noted the difference between the community college and four-year college setting and why they chose to stay at the four-year institutions.

> When I was at the community college, when I was doing the night classes, I realized there was more of a community at my present school. I chose to switch and work here because at the community college, I knew hardly any of the adjuncts; we were all coming and going. Nobody had office hours. You showed up, taught your class, left. If you had a problem with a student... it wasn’t... I might have been able to try to connect more if I didn’t have a small child, but the connection didn’t happen. There was a lot of isolation in that context.

Jenny found that her four-year college was very supportive of her ability to manage motherhood with working as a contingent faculty member. Perhaps one of the primary factors of the college’s flexibility was the size of the school and the type of
Institution. Jenny worked at a small, private college in the southeast United States. The college was affiliated with the Methodist church. Prior the interview, I looked at all of the participant’s college websites to examine their demographics and support systems. In addition to finding the four-year institution more supportive than the community college, she felt her college often went above and beyond to help her manage her dual role as a mother and employee.

For example, one time I could not figure out how to make lab change at all and my middle child was throwing up, and I brought him to school with me, because my husband couldn’t get there until after class started. So, I brought this child with me to school with me with a bowl. I told my boss, he had been in meetings all morning, and I told him I had to bring my son to school and he said: “I will watch him for thirty minutes until your husband gets here and until my meetings start.” They have all been so very supportive of what I have to do, now how much of that is, you know, there is this value that we understand you have this family and your family should come first, um, I honestly don’t know if it’s across the institution, or if I just have the best dean ever, but there are these little things that I say I can see there’s that tension, but there’s never been hostility or this, I don’t care that your kids are sick, you have to do this. There have been times my daughter came from school and I’ll have to run and get here, and there’s help. From that standpoint, I can’t really think of any hostile moments.
Unlike Jenny who worked at a small, private Christian college, Amy felt it was more difficult to combine work and motherhood within her institution. Amy works at a very large research university located in the southeast United States. She noted at length how she felt in order to be successful on a college campus; mothers have to live their lives like their children are invisible. While this did not combat the problems the women faced from being contingent faculty, she felt it helped avoid the circumstances that affected her career because she had a small child. She closed her interview by remarking,

*Don’t talk about your kids. I have one picture in my office, and I don’t talk about her, and I think I’m well received for it. Higher levels up receive me well because I do these grants and I don’t talk about my daughter. Nobody is saying, ‘Oh, why don’t you bring your daughter around, that doesn’t happen, and it’s all women. I think for those women, it was harder for them to move through the ranks and so they don’t, they are like, hey, I have to work doubly hard to get here and you’ve sort of just walked in. I mean, women were not openly welcomed in academia twenty to thirty years ago. It’s easier now, and so I think there are a lot of women that didn’t have kids, like one of my deans, no kids, two of my colleges, no kids, and I think they chose that life, but they understand the consequences.*

I was able to observe Amy’s office in a Skype exchange. My journal notes reflect the absence of pictures of her children or artwork from them in her office space.

In order to reach work related goals within the academe, some of the women, like Jenny, tried to find a way to allow their work and home spheres to intersect. Others, like
Amy, felt they needed to keep the spheres separate in order to move towards more advanced careers in the future.

When we were on campus, all of us felt it was important to get as involved as possible on campus, even if we didn’t get paid for our time. By doing additional work on campus, we felt more connected to the four-year institution. For example, Mia noted, “The one thing I did last year was go the end of year faculty luncheon. My mom came up because it was the middle of the day and I couldn’t find a babysitter.” Jenny also talked about the importance of doing things on campus.

*I get to go to the faculty development workshops on campus, and that has helped me feel a part of the community of the school. They were happy to allow me to do it if I wanted to. So that has been a really nice, and made things more positive. There have been times or issues where another faculty member has said, ‘oh, I know somebody’. You know, just ways that things have worked better because I’ve been welcomed as a part of the community.*

**Need for Institutional Policy and Practice Changes**

By getting involved on campus, we felt we were making our present circumstances on the college campus better. At the close of the interviews, the participants and I discussed ways to feel more supported in terms of our work sphere on the college campuses. I said, “My big dream was always to be this big university professor and to be publishing. I love teaching. I think I idealize academic life. Walking through the quads, reading under trees, and talking to students….” Mia interjected,
We do romanticize it because there are some things wrong with it, but it is a wonderful place. You’ve got open minds. I do think there needs to be some policy changes. I also think you can teach differently. I had such great experiences in the schools that I would love to be a part of that. There are some professors that changed my life, and I want to be that person. I wouldn’t give up writing, but I want to do that. It’s my dual dream.

Some of the policy changes Mia and I discussed also came up in the closing of my interview with Jenny. She spoke in great detail about how we all negotiate support within the work sphere. Jenny said,

*I’m just trying to think from an institutions’ perspective, how do you do that—be supportive of mothers who are contingent faculty. I mean, if my child is sick and we have class, I mean, in college, you can’t reschedule classes to stay caught up. On-site childcare would be the best, but technically the childcare my son went to is not on-site, it’s a separate daycare, although when you walk to chapel you walk by the playground. They were two separate entities but it was convenient because I could walk over and pick him up. It’s extremely convenient. Access to that, that was a big deal and made things very easy. I do think that having some kind of support group or something like that with someone who actually understands what’s going on, like someone who has found themselves as an adjunct with small children. The issues you face, or just having a sounding board of somebody to vent to about your frustrations who’s not going to look at you and say I’ve never experienced
anything like that... because so much of the time, and I’ve found this to be true, when my husband and I would get into discussions about things that were driving me crazy, he would try to fix them, and I would say, I don’t want you to fix it, I just want you to shut up and listen, to tell him why I was aggravated. So having that sounding board of someone who will listen and say I understand, it will be okay, and not say anything. I just want to talk about it so we can move on. Not everybody’s personality is that way, but I think for a lot of people it would be helpful to just get it out there and get it out of their system.

For the women who had been contingent faculty longer, or who had older children, there seemed to be less guilt and frustration than with the younger mothers, particularly when it came to support from within the institution. Pam mentioned, “The tone of the conversation used to be a lot darker, even though there still aren’t any changes at the school. There is still a lack of support. There still is no childcare. There is no…most of the schools don’t have mentor groups. There is not a community driven anything, and I think there should be, but I feel okay.” An inspection of the college’s website showed the lack of support groups or childcare on her college campus, just like at Mia’s college, however, unlike Mia who felt a great deal of angst about the lack of support, Pam seemed more okay with the circumstances.
Impact of Male on Work Sphere

Just as within the home sphere, the influence of the male husband was important within the work environment. For some of the women, this dealt with how the husband managed aspects of their wives' lives outside of the home. For others, the male influence, and how it affected the work sphere, relayed their experiences with male bosses and male peers within the academe.

For the women, the most influential aspect of their husband’s opinion about the work sphere was whether or not they should work, or continue to work, as contingent faculty. Mia stated, “Adjunct jobs are gone now. They asked me to teach three classes in the fall, but I’m not sure I’m going to do it. My husband said, take your own mini-sabbatical. We talked about this a year ago. Hearing I’m not going to teach makes me think I’m not contributing. I have this wonderful husband.” For her, the positive influence of a male husband contributed to her negotiation of the work sphere.

Jenny also had a positive influence with a male in her work sphere. Her positive influence was her boss, the dean she worked for within the college. She commented,

*I can say I have the most wonderful boss ever. I have a male boss; he’s the division chair and the dean, so he wears many hats too. He’s probably the age of my parents, because his daughter is the same age as me. He has one child. My boss has been very understanding, like my children are sick and he’s like, it’s okay, you take them to the doctor, we’ll figure it out, which has happened very rarely, thank God, but it has happened.*
Unlike most of the women who faced negative opinions from their male peers and male mentors, Jenny found strength in her relationship with her boss.

Although Jenny was able to find a strong role model influence from her male boss, she also experienced some negative perspectives from the male peer within her work sphere. For example, she continued,

_There are three contingent faculty in biology. I’m the youngest of the three, but we are all close in age, and we all have children. Most of the children are around the same place. One is another female and the other is a man. Well, the man has a wife. Sometimes he says he doesn’t understand why I don’t get certain things done and I’m like, it’s because I’m the wife. I do not have a wife to do all this stuff for me, and he just kinda looks at me like I’m crazy. I feel like there are moments that they, the men in my office, have no clue what I’m talking about when I do not have a husband at home, and I have to go pick up my children from school, I mean I have to go and do that. I do not have a babysitter that can go and do that for me. It has to be me._

For most of the women, they felt that there was a male negative influence within the academe that was greater than the opinions of one or two male peers. For instance, at the close of the interview, some of the women talked about how academia was still male dominated. For instance, Amy talked about how she did not intersect her home and work life. She said, “I still very much think it’s the old white man world, like don’t talk about your kids, with anybody, don’t talk about your kids.” Amy felt she couldn’t mention her children and their daily routine, or even have pictures of them in her office, in order for
her to not resistance from her male peers. Pam also added, “I think you have to be aware that you are in a male dominated environment. If you want a job and you are competing with a man and you have a degree and he doesn’t, then you’ll have a chance.” Fortunately, for all of the women, they had supportive husbands at home who helped combat the gendered expectations we are all up against.

Narrative Elements

Just like in the home sphere, sacrificing one sphere on the altar of another was a metaphor that was present within the work domain. Instead of the women worrying about “sacrificing their kids on the altar of work,” the women also worried about “sacrificing work on the altar of their kids.” Jenny summed up her sentiments about this metaphor during her interview. “When I’ve gone back to work, I say I don’t want to sacrifice my career on the altar of my children. It’s hard. I have a stack of papers to grade but supper to cook. I might not be able to go outside and watch my children pass the football, or sit down and watch a movie with you. I have these degrees and I want to stay home with you, but I also want my job. It’s conflicting.” I also understood Jenny’s sentiments about sacrificing her job on the altar of her children and vice versa. For me, this feeling came after the birth of Harper. In addition to losing my autonomy, I felt I had to sacrifice the degrees and education I worked so hard for. I wanted to be able to stay home with her, but I also wanted to get out and teach and to work outside of the home. I also thought, and still think, my feelings are conflicting; it’s complicated.
Within the work sphere, there were also some additional, interesting metaphors that reflected the women’s experiences within the academe. For instance, one metaphor that came up often during the interviews was that teaching was “nourishment for our mind and souls.” For all of us, we felt a hunger to be around other intellectuals and students. Additionally, we also craved the comfort of talking to other mothers for support who were similar circumstances. I found it interesting that actual food was present in all of the interviews. Mia and I shared breakfast and coffee at her kitchen table. Pam and I met at a bakery for Danishes and coffee. Amy ate vegetables during our Skype interview, and Jenny and I ate ice-cream cones. It seems that food was something that the women and I could physically share together. For one, it allowed us to multitask. Additionally, and on a deeper level, the food connected us as we broke bread together. We found energy and strength through our meetings and connection to each other. Through our chats over meals, the women and I were able to fill ourselves with physical and spiritual nourishment from the support of one another.

For the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, temporality was also particularly of note in the work sphere. For instance, the women talked about how their past experiences affected their present choices as women. For one, the fact that the women were raised as “little men” showed how they thought they could “do it all… at one time,” even though this notion seemed less realistic as the women became mothers. Many of the women also talked about how they acknowledged the change in their perceptions as time went on. Jenny noted,
I would be interested to know, other people who have been on a similar path, like wanting to be a mother and pursue a career, how many people did it work out the way they thought it was. For example, when I said in college I wanted to be a professor. If you also knew me and knew I wanted to be a stay at home mom, if you knew me, would you be like, okay this is how it’s really going to work out, what it would look like? I say all the time if people had told me what certain things would be like in my life, and be the way they are, like ten or fifteen years ago, I would have smacked them. I would not have believed them. Now that I’m here, there is very little I would have changed, in many ways it’s worked out better than I could have imagined, like the flexibility and how it’s worked out, like sure there’s been frustration like I really wanted to be a professor, but then I look back and think it might have been best that I hadn’t been a professor all these years, there would have been more responsibilities.

The women acknowledged that the past affected their present and their future. Although many women’s experiences diverged from their original expectations, they were happy and content with the choices they made. The women often realized they couldn’t “have it all… at one time,” but they could do both things. They could be a mother first, which repeatedly was the number one factor for us, but then there was also time to pursue an academic career.

For the sociality commonplace, the women felt isolated from their peers at work, even their female peers. The women acknowledged that their experiences were different than the men and women who were not also the primary caretakers of the family. The
women did note, however, that they wished there was a way to form social groups with women who were similar to them. The possibility of mentor and support groups was an idea that would allow for more social interaction within the work sphere. The formation of social networks was a fundamental implication presented in the narratives.

Finally, place was important for the participants in the analysis. Instead of literally meeting the women within their home, which I did with a few of the participants; I also met with some of the women at their college. For us, the academic institution where we reside is an important aspect of our narratives. Within the halls of the academe, the women fulfill their roles as contingent faculty members. The academic institution complicated the women’s experiences because most of the women felt they did not have a “room of their own.” The women often shared office space, or did not have a physical location designated just for them on-campus. The women were often not involved in board meetings, extracurricular activities or campus, and so forth. The isolation from the rest of the institution caused strife for the women. However, it was also in the academic classroom where the women found fulfillment through teaching. All of the women I interviewed taught at least some of their classes in a physical classroom. The interaction with the students gave us a great deal of satisfaction.

Within the work sphere, the women felt conflicted about how much time they spent away from their children. Although all of the women wanted to work, it seemed that working part-time as contingent faculty members was the best way for them to achieve a compromise between their family and professional goals. The most common themes that emerged out of this sphere were that the women had to alter their original
academic plans and goals in order to put their family first, that they did not receive much support from within the academic institution, part-time work was the best way to manage their career goals, and that the support from their husbands was pivotal. We all acknowledged that teaching “satisfied our soul” and enabled us to navigate between our home and work spheres.

**Self**

During the interviews with all of the women, the self-sphere was certainly the domain of our lives that was discussed the least. Although the women spoke some about how they viewed themselves, took care of themselves, and how they received support in this realm, the majority of the interviews discussed work and home life. However, it is important to note that the self-sphere is a very significant aspect of the women’s perceptions and experiences. For instance, some of the women discussed how they got into academia, or wanted to become mothers, because of factors of their personalities. Another way that the self-sphere was vitally important was the role of the support of other women and how that affected their lives. For most of the women, they tried to find metaphorical “outlets” to help them negotiate this sphere, such as exercise, friends, or writing and reading. The “outlets” gave them a perspective about the other aspects of their lives, even if we don’t have time to focus on them. The women acknowledged that the self-sphere often was ignored because it was not “screaming for attention.” Although the women chose to discuss this sphere the least during the interviews, it was still an area of our lives that was fundamental.
Like with many factors within the other spheres, the women’s past background affected how they viewed themselves. For instance, some of the women talked about how aspects of their personality shaped their present roles. The participants considered some of their personality traits as positive, while they found other aspects of their personality as negatives.

**Personality Traits**

All of the women talked about how they wanted to be mothers, ever since they were little girls. In turn, many of the women put their children ahead of other priorities. I repeatedly observed these sentiments in my field notes over the course of the semester. For example, Amy frequently spoke about how she put her child first. The fact that she wanted to spend time with her, daily, was a positive aspect of her personality. She, like many of the women, realized how much she wanted to be, and enjoyed being a mother, and therefore cherished time with her children.

Some of the women talked about how their own passion for language and education helped them be better mothers and teachers, even though reading and writing was an outlet for them. Pam repeatedly mentioned how she “loved language.” Mia often spoke about how reading or writing for pleasure was rewarding for her. For instance, when we met at her home, we spent a great deal of time talking about the walls of books that lined her home. I observed the stacks of books at Mia’s house in my observation data. I also take strong delight in reading. As I looked around my home, I saw books lining bookcases, books stacked under the coffee table, and in baskets all around my
home. In fact, my newborn baby did not have a closet because the closet in the nursery was overflowing with books I could not bear to part with. All of the women loved talking about our strengths, such as our shared love of our children (the home sphere) and education (our work sphere).

We all had multiple interests that we found positive characteristics of ourselves. Pam said, “I’ve always had multiple interests and find them self-reinforcing, the skills I’ve been given apply very well to teaching and to mothering. It’s all the same skill sets, it’s just how you apply them in various places. So to me, it’s not as exhausting as it sounds because I’m doing some of the same things. I have to figure out people, so I carry them into different areas without having to be a different person.” She later discussed her love of fostering children and how she considered that a calling with her personality and further showed how she walked amongst the spheres of her life. “Somehow I think we keep different worlds that keep each other in check. I know fostering pushes me, but at least for now it’s hard to not be there.” Even though Pam showed me very positive attributes of herself, we all acknowledged characteristics of ourselves that might not be as positive.

Jenny talked about some aspects of her personality that she found could be a negative attribute. She said, “I’m kind of an all-in person, and that’s been a struggle for me being so much into my job. I have plenty of things to fill up the hours, and I don’t want my children to suffer because I’m gone.” I noted Jenny’s personality traits in the volume of email exchanges and text messages from her over the course of the interview period. Pam echoed the perspective that some of her positive attributes could have
negative consequences. For example, she said, “I’m very task-oriented.” She mentioned that having children allowed her to break away from her regulated personality. “Having preschoolers, I have to get on the floor with them. It makes me playful.” Like Jenny’s personality characteristics, I also noted Pam’s task-oriented personality in our email exchanges. She would often email me to discuss upcoming interviews, current newspaper articles regarding the lack of contingent faculty and so forth. Since most of us were very task-oriented, although we had to decrease our task-oriented personalities because of our toddlers, we often struggled with taking time for ourselves, especially when so much of our time was taken up elsewhere.

Lack of Time

Time management issues were the biggest factors in why women let the self-sphere become overlooked. Repeatedly, the women spoke about how there simply were not enough hours left in the day for them to do something for ourselves. Pam mentioned that there was an absence of the self-sphere in her life. She mentioned, “I don’t do much for myself. I don’t really know. Isn’t that terrible! We don’t do anything… well, it’s been really nice since the summer, my husband’s best man moved here, so it’s been really nice because it’s a friend from outside of school, they have adopted a little boy… No, even vacations are for family. We get together for the 4th of July and Christmas and that’s it.” Pam later realized that she does have some past-times that are for her own pleasure. She mentioned she likes to go thrift-store shopping. She said, “I go almost every week. It’s therapeutic. Since high school, that’s what I like to do.” I had the opportunity to go with
Pam to a thrift store once during the semester. I was able to see how bargain shopping for her family brought her a great deal of personal joy. Although Pam confessed she usually buys clothes for her children, and often nothing for herself, she felt the act of looking for things for her children and getting them at a bargain price was a pleasure for her.

Although Amy still dealt with time management issues, she felt the need to protect her self-sphere and keep it a priority.

*On Monday and Wednesday I teach. After I teach, I don’t come home. I’ll go get a pedicure or exercise then, and then the other thing I try to do, like every other week, there’s a group of women I’m in a book club with once a month, and every other week we’ll go out on like a Wednesday night or something for a drink, so once a week, I go out with girlfriends. Maybe not consistently every week, but at least three times a month. And the other thing that my husband does, and it’s something we’ve really stuck with, but Saturday mornings he takes Grace. There’s a spin class I really like and then I, um, from 10:30-2:30 that’s when I’ll do work, or sit in a coffee shop and read the NY Times, I’ll do whatever, but it’s my sacred time. He has great time alone with Joy. So pretty much every Saturday he takes Joy from 9:30 to 2:30. And that’s kind of set. That doesn’t budge, but I will say this, it goes in cycles. Like the past two months have been kind of crazy, but I don’t give up the exercise, but there’s less down time. There’s less time that I read books, and I love reading books, or reading the NY Times, and no pedicures, no calling friends. I haven’t talked to my friends, and that’s a very nurturing thing for me, but I
know in one more month it will go back to normal. I just know that this is kind of a period. Things are busy right now, but it will get better, but even when it’s busy I don’t budge on my exercise and my afternoons with Joy. I don’t budge on those things.

In this interview, Amy picked up on a great deal of findings from the women’s opinions about the self-sphere. For instance, in this vignette, she not only mentioned the problems with time management, but she also talked about, the collective love for reading and intellectual stimulation, the importance of her husband’s support, the significance of exercise, and the strong desire to connect with female friends. All of these aspects were critical components of the self-sphere.

**Importance of Exercise**

The importance of exercise was a common theme for all of the women within the self-sphere. For instance, Amy noted she put exercise as a priority in her life. From our face-to-face exchanges, it was apparent Amy took great care of her physical self. She was very fit and muscular; her passion for exercise and nutrition was noted in my personal reflection journal following our first meeting. In our interview she said,

*It’s funny; exercise comes before Joy and my husband even. So I exercise six days a week and that’s my thing. That’s my thing and I don’t give it up. I don’t compromise. For example, people will want to have meetings with me at 9:00 but I say, no I can’t meet until later because I exercise from 8:30 to 9:30; I just won’t meet with people, I’m like no, I can’t. I set that no, period. Or, if*
it’s something with someone like the president that okay, I have to meet, although nobody at that level has asked to meet with me.

Amy was not the only one who talked about how exercise helped them have time for themselves. For instance, Jenny also talked about how exercise helped her feel good about herself. She reflected,

I mean a good example of where the self-sphere has been really hard is right after my youngest was born, I got into really good shape, did a triathlon, and since that time have stayed in pretty good shape, run 5Ks, that sort of thing since my job duties picked up this year. Before I would teach Monday, Wednesday and Thursday and on those days I would run after lunch, and on Tuesday and Friday I would run whenever I want. This year I, I mean, running is one of those things that if just for me and… Oh, I’m so out of shape! I didn’t run because there was work and home. With my children’s crazy schedules and the increase demand on work, there just wasn’t time, and I’m still trying to navigate that. I had adapted to what that looked like as an adjunct, I accepted that on some days there would be dirty dishes in the sink, but that was okay, I mean the counters were wiped off, nothing was molding, but I knew I would be home the next day. But as my job has changed again, I kind of went through the transition. I’m just trying to figure it out, prioritize my time differently, but now I really think for me, because all of my kids have a sport, and I don’t… if I were at home I could do a lot of these things, like doing laundry. That suffers, but I don’t think work is the big contributor to my
stress, it’s the age of my family. Like last spring, all three played a different sport at the same time. How do you take three people to three different places at the same time, but that’s just one of those mother things, no matter what you do, you’re going to have these difficulties. The exercise thing is me trying to find that balance. I am really bad at balance. I see this all the time, I’m either a great mom and a horrible teacher, or a great teacher and really on top of it and a horrible mother to the standard of how I want to do it, or I’m in good shape and both other things suffer. In some ways it feels like a tug-of-war. How do I spend my time, how do I prioritize, you say, I could go for a run or grade papers, which need to be graded, or I could write a lecture. It does become difficult with the balance. I wish I had that figured out, but I do find the easiest one to neglect is self. I imagine that’s pretty common.

Jenny was right. Balance seemed like a difficult thing for the women to manage between time restraints, and the pull of both their work and home spheres. One way the women found peace with the chaos was with the support of their female friends.

**Support of Female Friends**

The support of the women’s female friends, particularly female friends who were also mothers, was perhaps the most influential aspect of the findings of the self-sphere. All of the women spent a great deal of time talking about how “it takes a village” to raise children, specifically, it takes a village of communal support. Mia said, “I don’t’ feel as isolated as I used to because I’ve made a lot more friends.” Female friends were
important to the women in a variety of ways. For instance, the friendships with women who had toddlers gave the mothers and children an emotional outlet. Further, friends who were mothers, and also in the workforce, gave the women perspective about managing careers with motherhood.

Many of the women discussed how making friends with other mothers of young children helped them feel less guilt, angst, and isolation. Friends made the women feel good about the choices they made. For example, on February 13th I wrote in my journal, “Today I am so glad that I found friends with other young children that I can talk to. I realized that sometimes I just need somebody to listen to me. I don’t need anybody to solve my problems, I just need somebody to say they are there for me.” Although some of my friends worked outside of the home full-time and many of my friends were full-time moms, having friends who are also mothers helped me put my life into perspective.

Many of the other participants found strength from their friends with young children. For instance, Mia said, “I have a lot of friends who are different types of moms. Some of my friends think, of course you can do it all. But, most of my friends with kids are like, ‘I don’t know how you do it all.’ I mean there are different types of moms here and different types of groups. There are a bunch of moms who stay home with several children. Although I love all of my friends dearly, I relate the most to moms who also work.” Amy also had friends in her life who were mothers that did not work outside of the home. “I do have two stay at home mom friends. One of my friends, Cory, just had her third, and my other friend just had a newborn and that was her fifth.” Amy mentioned she had many different types of girl friends from which she found strength. During a
playgroup with Mia and our children, I was able to see her interaction with many women and see how she gained nourishment from being around them.

Amy and Mia acknowledged they did not spend as much time, or relate to, the stay-at-home mothers as much as their friends who worked. Amy said, “I will say, this, those two moms, I like them, I just don’t see them as much. I see them maybe once a month because they have so many kids, and so busy.” Mia added, “My stay-at-home mom friends who are conservative, they don’t see what I’m doing as taking something away from my children, but really I don’t see them as much.” All of the women agreed throughout the interviews, it was nice to have somebody to talk to who, at least, partly understands the struggles of having young children, who was a part of the community of women in similar positions. I also noted this sentiment in many of my emails and journal entries. I realized I needed a community of women around me to find my place as a working mother.

When the women found friends who were mothers, who also worked outside of the home, they found additional support and understanding. Amy talked about the women in her book club, who are all mothers with young children. She stated,

Yes, we are all moms and we all have small kids, so we do lots of things together. That’s one thing I loved about this city was that we had this instant community and this instant community of friends. One of the moms, her daughter goes to the same Montessori that my daughter goes to, we all live within a mile of each other, and we all have kids from four to newborn. They all work. Some work more than others. Most of them are related to the
university, so they are either faculty. Some are faculty in the business school or the math department, or one is a doctor, or their husband is. Everybody works. That’s been… there is one woman who teaches grammar school and she’s part-time and she has two kids. Casey who’s three and Cooper who is one.

Amy continued,

So when I can do play dates with moms is from three until six. With those moms, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t, so I don’t see them as much. So, yeah, I would say overall most of my friends are working, but on the spectrum. I work a lot less than any of the other women do. But they are fine with it, they are completely fine with it. They are comfortable with their kids being in daycare and they are comfortable with it. They choose it, they don’t need to, but they choose it. They all have husbands that work too…but like I’m saying, their just really comfortable with it. It’s not that they don’t want to be a mom, because they like being a mom, they just don’t want to be a mom from 9:00-5:00. They work and then they want to be a mom at night. It’s just different than my mindset, so that’s kind of… I’m in this weird.. I don’t want to work full-time and have my kids in daycare, but I also don’t want to be a stay at home mom. I’m just trying to make it work in the in-between.

For many women, they felt a conflict living in this space “in-between” full-time motherhood and full-time working. We realize that this was a conflict we dealt with within all of the spheres of our lives. Like contingent faculty, we were trying to have the
best of both worlds, by walking amongst the spheres and trying to in fact, “do it all.”

Amy continued,

*It’s just so much easier. My friends who are mothers who work are so much more comfortable than I am. They do not want to be with their kids from 9:00-5:00. They are like, ‘I’m not like you, Alison, I’m not rushing home at 2:30 to be with my daughter.’ You know, they are like, I don’t work from home in the afternoons, I don’t do that. Most of the women are younger than me. From 30-33. My friend Christina and I are the old ones because we are 35 and 36. At 30, you’re trying to figure it out. I don’t think any of them had to think about it, though, it was so interesting to me. None of them even had the dialogue, it was just, I work, I like to work, and then I’ll have kids. Cause that’s what you do, and then your kids are at daycare or with a nanny and that’s just how it goes. There just wasn’t a lot of hemming and hawing about it.

Following this discussion, Amy and I had an intimate conversation about how we both shared this feeling of living in the space in-between. She said. “It seems like the women are extreme. Women either work and then have children, and the kids go to preschool, or you have somebody who wants to have ten babies and the picket fence. They are so extreme.” During the discussion, I shared my own sentiments.

*I understand what you’re saying; I’m in the in-between. I want to have a career, I’m going to school, but I don’t want my kids to be in preschool all day. I don’t have to do that, so why do I do that, and it’s only five years, but you have to do something because if you don’t, you’re going to be screwed. I
don’t fully connect with the stay at home moms, there is no intellectual outlet, but then the women who work all the time, I don’t identify with them either, because I do stay with Harper, I’ve turned down jobs to be with her, I would like to do these jobs, but the time isn’t right for me to sacrifice-I totally get where you’re coming from.

Amy and I were not the only women who desired friendship of other working moms. The rest of the participants felt like they were different than the other mothers they found friendship with. For instance, Jenny and I talked about how we try to find a balance with our children and how to parent them. How we parent our children reflected our own values and how we tried to find stability by not being on any side of an extreme in the way we parent. Jenny talked about one of her friends how is a lawyer who also has young children. She said the friend has never allowed her children to watch television and has only allowed them to listen to classical music. Jenny said, “You know, I try to find a balance. We do what we need to do. If she’s not going to take a nap, you have to breath for a second. My friend’s child is two and I think how is this going to work long term; we’re making it work.” All of us continued to try and make it work as we found ways to navigate the sphere of ourselves through the support of our friends, and by trying to find balance and peace.

**Internal Goals**

In addition to many of the goals the women had of seeing their friends more often, and finding balance as we walked in the space “in-between,” we also looked inwardly to
internal goals that allowed us to maintain our sense of autonomy while also allowing us
to be powerful mothers.

The women did have many internal goals as independent women, who were also
mothers. Many of the women talked about the dreams they had for their future. For
instance, Mia talked about her dream of traveling. Her dreams were evident by the
pictures of travels from her past that dotted her house. She also mentioned, “I still have
this dream. I want to do lots of things. I think I will do lots of my dreams, just not on the
same timeline.” She, like all the women, wanted to “do it all.” She continued, “I want to
be a mom, and a wife. I want to do it all... just not one at a time. Hard lesson to learn
because we’ve been told our whole lives we could do what we want to do.” In order to
manage the instability of the complexity of our lives, most of us tried to find ways to
“make it work.” For example, as Jenny talked about her parenting styles, and allowing
her children to watch television, she said, “We’re making it work. Parents are not all the
same. Children are not exactly the same. That’s a big lesson to accept.” While the women
worked towards their future goals and dreams, they realized they had to work within the
confines of the day-to-day as they negotiated everyday expectations with their dreams for
the future.

Female Gendered Expectations

Societal female gendered expectations of working mothers with young children
also played a factor within the self-sphere, that was particularly true as the women
reflected on having to “figure it out” and “make it work”. Amy, like Jenny, talked about how “everybody is different.” She said,

Everyone is so different. You know, the more moms I meet the more…
everyone just has to make it work how they make it work, it’s just so different.
Like my husband works from home, and there are chunks of time where I’ll say to him, listen, I need to run out from 2:00-2:30, Joy is sleeping, is it okay if I go, and he’ll say, ‘Sure, go ahead,’ well not everyone has that luxury. Like all of my friend’s husbands have desk jobs, right, so they don’t have that option. Or, they have two and three kids, and they have to keep them together, so it’s just different, I mean, I only have one, it’s a lot easier to negotiate with one.

Amy later noted,

You still have to figure it out. You still have to figure out how to get it done. I think my husband is just used to me making it happen, he’s like, ‘I don’t know, she just gets it done,’ so it’s just… I think if I had a job where I had to physically be at the office 9:00-5:00 it would be different, but I don’t have that kind of job, so ... Thank God... I did that for 6 years, which was not for me.

My job is more flexible, but I still have to get my stuff done.

Amy still had to “figure it out” and “make it work” around the needs and personality of her child, along with the gendered expectations of her husband.
Influence of the Husband

The influence of the women’s husbands was also primarily important to their health and happiness within the women’s lives. For instance, in Amy’s story about how she protected her self-sphere, one critical aspect of that was her arrangement with her husband that he take care of Joy on Monday and Wednesday nights, and also on Saturday mornings. I often had personal conversations with Amy during these times. When Jenny talked about how exercise was important to her, she also mentioned she could run when her husband was able to watch the children. Pam repeatedly talked about her husband was “amazing.” Mia also could not talk enough about how her husband helped her find strength in herself that allowed her to work on all of her goals and dreams. Finally, I acknowledge the importance of my own husband. Without his support and commitment to me in all spheres of my life, I would not be in the same, confident place I am in now.

Narrative Elements

The two most present metaphors within the self-sphere were that the self-sphere was often ignored because it was not “screaming for attention” and that the women and I had been raised as “little men.” Since we had so many people in our lives that were constantly vying for our attention, we often overlooked ourselves. We often talked about children crying for our love, husbands begging for attention, and bosses and coworkers pushing us to give up even more of ourselves. Since we felt we were often pulled in many directions, and that there was constantly someone asking for something, we often did not
take as much care of ourselves as those around us. We gave to others before ourselves, something many mothers do, and often did not give anything to ourselves.

The second metaphor that was evident in the self-sphere was that we felt inner conflict because we were raised to be “little men” but had trouble doing it all within the confines of our gendered cultural expectations. Even though there were constant social warnings about the impossibility of ultimately living our lives as “little men” we often felt we could do it all and do it all at one time. Jenny remarked, “It’s a hard lesson to learn because we’ve been told our whole lives we can do what we want to do.” She wondered,

*With other women, when they find themselves in these positions like, okay, I want to work part-time and have a family, or have a family and some sort of career, how many of them did that intentionally or how many of them kind of happened upon their lives. Because I’ve kind of wondered that. Was I totally ignorant and was somebody else kind of saying this stuff when I was going through grad school, did anybody even...was their a place that I could have learned this, that we can’t have it all, that we can’t have it all at one time?*

Despite our present gendered environment, many parents try to teach their daughters to have strong, masculine qualities. In fact, it seems that everywhere I look, more baby girls are being named typically male-associated names. However, when women get older, graduate from college, and begin to choose between a career or babies, or try to find a way to do it all at one time, they are realizing the improbability of being able to have it all.
In addition to the important themes and metaphors presented in the self-sphere, the women also focused on the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place. Temporality, or how the past affects the present and future, was significant within the home-sphere. Temporality seemed to be the most affected by the women’s opinions about their own personal characteristics.

When the women discussed the self-sphere, they often discussed the positive and negative attributes they felt made them the women they were. Our past shaped our opinions, and therefore helped shape who we are. Therefore, the women’s self-opinions greatly affected this commonplace. Additionally, the women’s desire to be mothers also affected how they viewed themselves. All of the women acknowledged they defined themselves as mothers above all other attributes. Defining ourselves as mothers over our own autonomy showed how our children greatly shaped who we were.

Unlike the home and work sphere where temporality seemed to be the most dominant commonplace, sociality was the overwhelming commonplace within the self-sphere. The women’s friendships, or social networks, greatly influenced how they perceived themselves and how they took care of this sphere. The women had many different social groups of women that were important in their lives. For example, the women identified with stay-at-home mothers and full-time mothers. While there were not many of us who had friends who were mothers of young children and contingent faculty members, we could find strength from the different groups. Amy’s discussion about how she often felt like she’s in the space of the “in-between” characterized the importance of sociality to her narratives. We could identify with stay-at-home mothers because we did
not work full-time. We could identify with working mothers because we did work outside of the home. However, I found we often felt like a particular social group was missing because we didn’t fit into either extreme category of women. On the one hand, we found connection with the different groups because of our similarities. However, the differences also factored in as well. The women who stay home full-time did not understand our need for an intellectual outlet, while the women who worked full-time didn’t understand why we didn’t put our careers first. Navigating between the two poles categorized the participant’s into a social group that was often absent.

Finally, place was a less easily defined commonplace within the self-sphere. For most of us, the importance of place for the self was either in a space where we had support from our friends, or it was a place where we could be alone. For example, most of the women talked about how exercising was an emotional outlet. The place of the gym, or running outside, or sitting at a coffee shop reading the NY Times, was the place where we could fulfill our own needs without having to worry about the needs of others.

The self-sphere was an area of our lives that, while often overlooked, is an important area to study. How the women define themselves in relation to the home and in their work environment is based on their own perceptions about who they are, where they came from, and who they want to become. The most important themes presented in this section were the significance of female support, the need for emotional outlets, outside expectations and internal goals. While the women also depended on their husbands, the self-sphere was more commonly defined by personal dreams and expectations. The self-
sphere allowed the women to step out of their maternal responsibilities, the professional demands, and come together to communicate as a voice of empowered women.
CHAPTER SIX
LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In this final chapter I discussed the limitations of the research process. Some of the limitations provided areas where qualitative inquirers could expand the research in the future. Following a discussion of the limitations, I concluded the chapter noting the implications of the research. The implications were broken down into the three spheres of home, work, and self. Following the implications of the three separate spheres, I ended with a discussion of the intersections of these three spheres.

Limitations

There were six major limitations within the research study. The limitations were finding research participants; time limitations; conflicts; absent male-perspective; lack of diversity within the counter-narratives; and limitations with the geographic locations. The first limitation was finding research participants who met the study’s criteria. Since I found a number of these schools were not hiring as many contingent faculty, and using their full-time employees to cover the classes there were not many women who were available. Furthermore, there were even less who had children under the age of six and were also part-time contingent faculty. Once I found women who met the criteria, we often ran into problems with time, the second limitation. When the women did have time to meet, there were often many conflicts, the third limitation that contributed to the study. For instance, once I scheduled a meeting three months in advance, but on the day of the
interview, a childcare conflict interrupted our interview. The final three limitations discussed areas of research that could be added in the future. First, the voice of male perspective was absent. Second, there could have been more diverse voices within the counter-narratives. Finally, a different geographic location could be studied. The six limitations demonstrate the problems with the accessibility to this particular social group of women.

Although I used a variety of strategies to find participants at the onset of the study, it was difficult to find women who met my particular criteria. When I began studying this particular group of women, in 2008, there were more contingent faculty on college campuses. For example, in 2008 I started my Masters program in English. At that time, there were countless adjunct English instructor jobs at the college and the surrounding smaller colleges. By 2012, it was apparent that colleges are not hiring as many adjuncts. As of last semester, both of the colleges where I work as a contingent faculty member had stopped hiring adjunct instructors for the spring semester. This is similar to other four-year institutions (Finley. 2008). Additionally, one of the largest colleges in my hometown, that often staffed many part-time employees, was currently in a hiring freeze. A quote from a director at one of the smaller colleges in the area reflected this dilemma, “We have a small faculty to begin with and so the number of women who are instructing is small and the number of women with young children who are instructing is almost non-existent.”

Because of the lack of contingent faculty members, specifically faculty members who met the study, I had to use networking as one of my primary forms of finding
participants. Although I spent a great deal of time working with human resource departments at colleges within the 50-mile radius, I found most of my participants through friends and acquaintances. Fortunately, I found four participants who did meet the study criteria. Additionally, since I used a narrative inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006), my voice served as the fifth participant.

After I found the four participants, the second limitation came from the lack of time the women had to give. Since all of us worked at least one contingent faculty job, in addition to being the primary caretaker of children under six years old, it was hard to find time to meet. Most of the women had to commute great distances to their schools. Additionally, they had many other scheduling conflicts. For instance, a majority of women could only meet during the hours their children were in preschool. Since the women had to commute to and from the preschools back to their colleges or to their homes, it was hard to find private time to speak. Because of the time conflict, I ended up doing one lengthy interview with each participant, instead of three smaller interviews. I also conducted an additional interview for member-checks. The lack of time with the participants could be seen as a limitation (Ward, 2000; Ward, Wolf-Wendel, 2006). I did, however, establish a strong rapport with each of the participants. For example, I spent a great deal of time during the study talking to the women through various outlets like the phone and through emails. Additionally, I also established rapport and credibility since I too was experiencing the same phenomenon. In future research, it would be ideal to be able to develop deeper relationships with the participants and spend more time together in the communal setting. In order to combat this limitation, I utilized outlets in order to form
strong bonds with the participants. I corresponded with each of the participants on a regular basis. I had an open-dialogue with the participants frequently though email, Skype, and the phone. While the actual interview was over a period of a couple of hours with each woman, I spent a great deal of time communicating with them beforehand in order to gain familiarity and connection.

The final three limitations revolved around ways that the research questions could be further explored in future analysis. First, there could have been more diversity with my participants in the areas of class and race. Since social class helps construct narratives, it would have been good to speak with women from different race and ethnic backgrounds (Etter-Lewis, 1991). All of the participants I spoke with had similar economic situations. For example, all of the participants were married and had a husband who worked full-time. Additionally, all of the women I interviewed were White. While I tried to get participants from various race and social classes, the participants who met my criteria were all similar in social standing and ethnicity. Since I was trying to combat the “mythical male norm” within the counter-narrative, I realized I might have created a “white, middle-class, female norm” instead (Etter-Lewis, 1991, p. 44). Etter-Lewis (1991) stated, “To take a white, middle-class female’s experience as a norm presents its own set of problems. To take a white, middle-class female’s experience as a given and generalize to all other women ignores the experiences of women of color and working-class women. It establishes an elitism within the heart of much feminist research” (p. 44). I acknowledged that the voice of women of color and women who do not have the same
social status is very much warranted. I hope that this is an area where the research can be expanded upon in the future.

The second area of research that could have been analyzed was the male perspective of contingent faculty who are fathers of children under the age of six. Since more men are becoming the full-time parent while the wife works full-time in the workforce, it would be interesting to hear their narratives. For example, there is a gap in the voice of men who work in academia and have families, too. In a 2012 article in the *Chronicle*, Stratford discussed coping mechanisms of men who are on the tenure track and also have children under the age of six. He reviewed the findings of a new study from researchers at the University of Texas, Austin. The findings suggested men often compartmentalize in order to divide their time between work and home life. Additionally, the study suggested that the men relied more on the support of their spouses (Stratford, 2012). The perspective of men who are not on the tenure-track and have young children would be an additional layer to study. While I recognized this might be an area of future research, for my analysis I wanted to focus on the counter narratives of the male norm. My interests lay in researching mothers who have young children and are also contingent faculty.

Additionally, I could have contrasted the data by looking at the narratives of academic non-mothers. For example, in Ramsay and Latherby’s (2006) analysis, they discussed how “non-mothers are also affected by the ideology of motherhood” (p. 28). Although the women noted that research about mothers in academia is certainly important, they felt that there was a voice lacking for women who did not have children
in academia as well. While women with children often feel isolated within academia, the authors argued that women who do not have children feel “othered” (p. 42). The comparison of the two groups of women’s stories would be particularly interesting within a feminist framework. Finally, the geographic location of the study was limiting. I restricted the interview search process to four-year colleges within a 50-mile radius in the South. The research could certainly be extended to different geographical locations in the future.

In addition to the limitations, it is important to conclude the research study with implications. There were many implications of the study. The implications broke down into the three spheres of home, work and self.

Implications

Home

In the home-sphere, there were three major implications. First, it appeared that the majority of women defined their lack of support through a lack of time. Second, since the narratives were constructed around a masculine ideology, it was important to examine the concept of mothering as work. Finally, the significance of masculine expectations was significant to the findings.

Most of the women felt that the lack of time influenced their feelings of frustration. The women felt that they took on most of the care-taking responsibilities at home in addition to any work they did outside of the home. They often discussed the burden of care and the conflicting emotions they had within that role (Evans & Grant,
The women wanted to be defined as mothers, first, but they also felt there was an unfair distribution of labor within the home. The women’s strong sentiments about the unfair distribution of labor within the home were an implication that warranted additional examination (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). The reason why the women felt there was an unfair disadvantage was because they felt they needed to do more within the home because their husbands were the primary income earners. The conflict arose because the women did not feel as valued when they worked within the home, in contrast to working within academia, because they did not bring home a paycheck.

Mothering as work was an area of research that coincided with the implications of the research study. In Miriam’s (2008) analysis he discussed how gender differences influence forms of social stratification through complex relations among work, family and education. He discussed how women’s work as mothers in a form of unpaid work (p. 262). Since the women did work, but did not get compensated for all of the hours they spend taking care of the home there are “physical and emotional consequence” (p. 266). In an environment of increasingly competitive economic hardships, the inequalities were intensified. Women felt devalued because they did not make money, however important the work was for the family and the community. In an article by Griffith and Smith (2005) they noted even further “mothering is subordinate to all work” (p. 124). In the forward they noted, “to understand women’s position in capitalism one has to grasp women’s position in the family” (Smith, 2005, p. vii). The women’s position was culturally and capitalistically constructed. Since we live in a patriarchal environment, the female gendered expectations are governed by masculine expectations.
Within the home, women often relied on the husband’s support, both financially and emotionally. When the husbands were home, the women felt frustration when they did not share childcare responsibilities. When the men realized they should take part in childcare responsibilities, the women felt more at ease. The men’s paycheck was vitally important to the narratives, however. Since the women worked part-time for low salaries (Baker & Baker, 2001), the men’s financial support as the primary breadwinner allowed the women to pursue academic professional interests outside of the house.

Work

In the work-sphere, there were quite a few major implications that merited discussion. Like in the home-sphere, the relationship of the sphere to time was particularly of note. Also, masculine expectations were significant (Armenti, 2004). Additionally, the work sphere’s implications were affected by the lack of support and the significance of part-time work.

As the women found themselves working outside of the home, they often discovered that their ability to multitask and be good at time management were critical to their effectiveness. Since the women were primarily in charge of the responsibilities of children, they were the ones that had to work their schedule around childcare, sick days and so forth.

Most of the women combated time management issues by choosing to work part-time (Baker & Baker, 2001). Part-time work appeared to be one solution for the women that allowed them to be both full-time mothers and expand their professional careers. The
women felt that part-time work gave them the balance they were looking for. They were able to contribute to the home monetarily, they were able to have intellectual stimulation, and they were able to find emotional nourishment through their time in the classroom. Although the women felt that part-time work best suited the needs of their schedule, most of the women acknowledged finding part-time work was becoming increasingly harder in academia.

Since it appears more colleges are cutting contingent faculty positions in order to combat budget decreases (Finley, 2008), the women felt even more obligated to stay in their positions of employment. This was one implication of the study that was surprising. I thought there would be plenty of women who fit my search criteria; it was hard to find women who fit the participant description due to the closing of common adjunct jobs in the community. The women did, however, manage to find ways to work in conjunction to their roles in the home and the self-sphere.

Self

In the self-sphere, the lack of support and its relationship to time was also of note. Additionally, how the women chose to define themselves and nurture their autonomy was a significant implication. Women often neglected their space within the self-sphere in order to dedicate their sole time and energy to work and home spheres (Davidson & Hatcher, 2002). The metaphor that the self was often neglected because it was not “screaming for attention” was a common theme presented during discussions of this sphere. The women often neglected themselves in order to mother or mother others.
When the women did find time to nourish their own selves, they found fulfillment through personal betterment, like reading and exercising, or through the time they spent with their female friends. The women often talked about how they viewed their own personalities, which led them to be the type of women they had become. The commonplace of temporality was significant throughout all of the narratives. The women often acknowledged how their past had shaped who they had become; this theme was pervasive when examining the self-sphere.

For most of the women, temporality played a major factor within their narratives. One way that temporality had a significant implication was that all of the women acknowledged there was a lack of support for contingent faculty with young children at their institutions. Although the women felt there needed to be change, they said they felt more comfortable with the lack of support over time. It would be interesting to study why they felt more comfortable with the lack of resources over time. On the one hand, it could be that the women understood there was a lack of resources for them on the college campus. They may have even felt they didn’t need any resources as time went on at their institution. On the other hand, perhaps the women just accepted that the need for change was not likely to occur within their male-dominated environment. They may have still actually wanted change and support, but finally accepted that the change was not going to happen. I suspect the answer lies somewhere in the space in-between. Based on my findings, it appears the women became more comfortable with their institution and the place they were within the academe, as they grew older, and their children grew older. The women certainly felt less isolated and frustrated over time. However, I fear that the
women also began to accept the “mythical male norm” and began to live within it. If this was the case, change and institutional policy has even more reason to occur.

**Intersections**

Based on the findings of the study, I would like to offer some suggestions about how to change the patriarchal academic institution. I believe that there does need to be change. Women need community and support, and a place where they can come together to find a collective space to share ideas and stories about their narratives. The literature on the subject offered suggestions for future research and the implications from the desire to work towards change within the academe.

**Leadership and Career Strategies**

Rich stated (1979), “The university is a hierarchy. Each woman in the university is identified by her relationship to the men in power rather than to other women up and down the scale” (p. 125). This was a definition of leadership that still needs to be interrogated. Women are, as Rich noted, defined by their relationship to men. Instead of looking at the power hierarchy of the relationship of men to women, it was helpful to look at how women on campus are connected and to examine their communities. As Rich added, “In order for women to thrive in a university setting, she must be able to discover and explore her root connection to other women” (p. 137).

Women must become aware of their alignment with one another as they work to counter the patriarchal system of academia. Women’s voices must no longer be silenced
or marginalized, nor should their positions of power be measured against the men they work with. As Anzaldua and Moraga (1981) expressed, “Here we begin to fill in the spaces of silence between us. For it is between these seemingly irreconcilable lines—the class lines, the politically corrected lines, the daily lines we run down to each other to keep difference and desire at a distance—that the truth of our connection lies” (106).

It is time for a change in leadership models for women. Unlike past leadership models that have been focused on a male system (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Heward, 1994), new, female-centered, models need to be put in place. One author who has suggested an innovative framework for women’s leadership was Asher (2010). For her, the leadership model must hinge on the three themes of: recognizing one’s implicatedness, maintaining integrity and developing resistance. The male definition of leadership needs to be interrogated, particularly within the feminist perspective. Asher concluded, “It is through this recursive, rigorous process that I sustain not only my vision and practice of leadership in the academe but also my integrity and resilience” (p. 74). Women must work towards countering the male-model and adopting their own forms of leadership.

In addition to women adopting new leadership models, women, must also work on implementing different career strategies into their professional careers. The concept of thinking about careers was the primary subject in Collins, Chrisler, & Quina’s (1998)’s book. In this analysis, the authors broke down the issues surrounding women and work in the academe into the categories of: the current status of women in the academe, women’s roles and career decisions, assuming leadership in higher education, and taking charge
and taking care. In addition to elaborating on many of the historical elements that require women to create new success strategies, the authors also call for creating a feminist mentoring network. Additionally, the work of Konek & Kitch (1994) also pays nod to the struggles women face when they are trying to enter the work force. Overall, women need to develop new strategies to combat the patriarchal and male dominated existing leadership and career models.

By combining new models of leadership and new career strategies, women who have been opted-out or pushed-out of academia may be able to stay in the institution and pave the way for future women scholars who also choose to be mothers. However, in addition to new leadership styles and career strategies, there are many areas in academia that need to be changed in order to make working in academia more conducive for women. The foundation for change for all women and mothers in academia lies in system wide changes.

For tenured track faculty mothers, there have already been suggestions about how to fight the male-tenure clock. In 2001, Drago and Williams concluded a study called the Faculty and Families Project that reached findings that women make up the majority of the caregivers in the country, regardless of their employment status, and that the ideal worker model currently favored in academic settings is discriminatory against women. Evans and Grant (2008) concluded, “The study’s recommendations were for system wide changes that would encourage female faculty to take advantage of existing family-friendly policies without fear of reprisal, and restructure these policies to be more equitable to the academic community as a whole” (p. xxi). Therefore, women need to
take advantage of the already existing policies, without fear of punishment, while also working to create new policies that will help more women and mothers in the future.

Fighting the male-tenure clock and pushing for policy change was rooted in the inherit need for activism for women within academia (Schmidt, 2009; Thompson, 2001). Activism will help women work towards changing policies in the future. Changing the male-tenure clock will help untenured and contingent faculty by allowing for more flexibility within academia. For instance, some schools have stopped the tenure-clock for women when they go on maternity leave (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008). By creating policies that help women work and have children, more women will be able to make career advancements within the academe.

For tenured or untenured, full-time or part-time faculty members, one critical component of change will be in the form of changing policy. Just as amendment changes affected the transition of the women’s movement throughout history, political policy changes will have a dramatic effect on the amount of discrimination women working in academia will face in the future. There are certainly many policy changes that would be helpful for mothers, specifically contingent faculty members, against institutionalized sexism (Wills & Risman, 2006). For instance, although there are some policies, like maternity leave, that help women who are full-time, there needs to be support available to all women who work in higher education. For instance, family-friendly policies, like in-site childcare, needs to be accessible to all mothers (Finkelstein, 2003; Wilson, 2008).
Armenti (2004) discussed the need for policy change in her research that was significant to this analysis. She suggested institutions needed to “interpret, implement, and enforce various maternity policies” (p. 225). She stated that she supported:

The critical feminist belief that educational institutions contribute to gender inequities, play a role in reinforcing sexism, and do not interrupt patriarchy. Policies like maternity leave provide the illusion that universities are working toward gender inequity but these policies are flawed because the department chairs (mostly privileged white males) have the discretion to interpret, implement, and enforce them. (p. 225)

She continued, “Those in positions of power have failed to consider the needs of women on the issue of combining work and family. In turn, women’s possibilities to compete successfully in the workforce are diminished” (p. 226).

New mothers who are contingent faculty members have a particular voice that needs to be heard. By breaking the silence, hopefully the institution’s policy structure can change in the future. In order to create an alignment of goals, the institution must work towards dismantling its patriarchal underpinnings and work towards a more linear environment for the creation of ideas and the dissemination of knowledge for future generations. All of this needs to happen in an environment that allows for both being a mother and professional in higher education.

Components of Narrative Inquiry

Finally, since the research study was a narrative inquiry, I will end this chapter with an examination of some of the components of this type of research and how these
components affected the study. First, it is important to look at the importance of language in how the women constructed stories about themselves. The language revealed common themes and metaphors that represented their experiences. Further; it is noteworthy to examine how the narratives served as counter narratives to the male norm that surrounded the women.

In the narrative inquiry, the language of the women allowed a rediscovery of their definition of themselves as new mothers and contingent faculty members. The story allowed them to express their opinions because, “narrative analysis is the common storied form” (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). The language of the story illuminated their experiences by giving them a medium for their story. As Etter-Lewis (1991) explained, “language is the primary vehicle through which past experiences are recalled and interpreted” (p. 44).

The flow of the conversations with the participants allowed their story to be expressed and their experiences shared. By examining the speech patterns of the narratives, it was apparent we used a very conversational tone in the dialogue. Etter-Lewis reminded the readers that often the answers to the story lay in the speech patterns. Since the women were all comfortable having a conversational dialogue, we were able to express our stories more openly and honestly.

In the narrative analysis, the themes and metaphors that emerged out of the stories revealed the importance of the narrative form. The common themes and metaphors further elaborated the voice of the women and illuminated the gaps that are missing from their stories. The most striking themes of the narrative were the importance of time, the significance of the temporality commonplace, and the influence of the male partner. For
example, all of the women talked about wanting to be able to do it all, but realizing they could not do it all at one time. These sentiments reflected both the importance of time and the realization that their stories were divergent from the normative male narrative. The women’s ability to manage their time and their stories directly correlated to the men in their lives ability to diverge from the gendered stereotypes. The more the men elected to be a part of the household and to support their wife’s decisions, the more content the women felt within the academe.

The metaphors present within the narrative inquiry also spoke a great deal to the implications of the study. The most significant metaphors was the importance of nourishment for the women, that the women worried about sacrificing their children on the altar of their work and vice versa, and perhaps, most importantly, the complications that occurred in their lives when they were both raised and expected to be like “little men.” First, the women searched for nourishment within all of the spheres of their lives. In the home, they looked to fill up their time with their children. In the work sphere, they found intellectual nourishment from their surroundings, and in the self-sphere, they found nourishment for their soul. There was no surprise that all of the interviews revolved around meeting and sharing physical food. All of us came to the metaphorical table looking for ways to fill ourselves.

The second metaphor, that the women were afraid that they would sacrifice their children on the altar of their work and vice versa was also important to the findings. The women constantly looked for balance within their lives. None of the women wanted to enter the metaphorical cut-throat environment of full-time or tenured positions when their
children were young. The fact that the women worried about literally bowing down to
their profession at the sake of their children holds a great deal of symbolism.
Worshipping one’s profession and putting it before children coincides with the mythical
male norm of academia. The feeling was that the women, and men, are not supposed to
talk about their family lives within the walls of the institution, they are supposed to erase
the family aspect of their lives in this sphere. When women are supposed to work long
hours, or take jobs that require excessive hours away from home, the participants felt they
were literally putting the needs of the institution above the needs of their families. The
metaphor is also important, however, on the inverse. The women also worried about
sacrificing their jobs for the sake of their families. Although the women wanted to be
mothers, first, they also acknowledged the importance of working outside of the home.
The women struggled to find a balance where their lives could be lived where the spheres
were interconnected, as opposed to a hierarchy of importance.

The stories of the women served as counter narratives to the “mythical male”
norm. Within the home, the women were responsible for the family, first. They were
under the societal expectation of the burden of care. In work, the women faced an
opposing problem—they were not supposed to discuss their family at all. In this way, the
women’s stories within the work sphere were supposed to follow the masculine narrative.
The women, who had been “raised as little men,” were supposed to act like men in the
academe. The women were trapped within the masculine expectations of them. They
were supposed to put their family first within the home sphere, but their narratives were
supposed to be absent of family within the work sphere.
The counter-narratives of the women showed how their spheres were heavily influenced by masculine expectations. The stories revealed, however, that the largest truths came when the women broke away from the “mythical male norm.” For instance, it appeared the women found the most strength when they acknowledged how they defined success and support. For the women, success was not influenced by the size of the paycheck or their status within the institution. Instead, success was measured in the small everyday victories, like spending time with their children, or the strength they found from the appreciation of their students. While the women needed support from their male husbands, both within the work and home spheres, the women also found great support when they connected with the community of women that understood their position.

Chapter Summary

Raising children “takes a village.” The women’s stories revealed this was important within all the spheres of their lives, including their lives within the academe. Instead of hiding their family and the stories that revolve around the women labeling themselves as mothers, first, the women needed a community to express their narratives. This dissertation aimed to give women a place to not only voice their stories, but also use them to break away from the male-dominated norm and show direction for future implications. It was my aim to illuminate how the interlocking spheres of work, home and self are navigated by a group of women. Griffith and Smith (2005) noted, “Education is historically and culturally constructed and tied in unique ways to families
and to parenting” (vii). It was my aim to show these connections through a narrative analysis.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Researcher’s Autoethnography

My autoethnography serves as a form of reflexivity (Altheide & Johnson, 2011; Mruck & Mey, 2007). The practice of telling my own story increased my self-awareness and allowed me to determine my own voice within the narrative inquiry. Finally, the autoethnography offered an opportunity for generating empathy, awareness, and rapport with the participants in my study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Janesick, 2011; Wolcott, 2010).

In May of 2008 I graduated with a Masters in English. During the time, I was working full-time as an academic advisor at a small, liberal arts college while my husband attended dental school. My first job as an adjunct was at a local community college. Following a year of working at the technical college, my husband graduated from dental school and was accepted into a dental residency program in North Carolina. A few months before graduation, I discovered I was pregnant. Since both of our families were from the area, we felt moving closer to home would be the most beneficial for our future family.

In June of 2009, Jeremy and I packed up our home in Charleston, I left my jobs at the College of Charleston and Trident Technical Community College, and we moved to North Carolina. In August, I started adjunct teaching positions at two small, private four-year institutions. One of the colleges was an hour south of my residence and the other college was forty-five minutes north. I was commuting at least two hours a day in order to adjunct two classes at each college. The pay at each college was $1800.00 a semester,
which barely covered the cost of gas. Although I was five months pregnant, I felt I needed to take the jobs in order to start my career and avoid gaps on my resume.

Apparently, I was not the only person who was in this situation. I quickly discovered there were other young mothers at the colleges who were in the same position. My interest began to grow in this moment about the voices of women, like myself, who were in similar positions. This semester was the semester I completed the pilot study.

When I applied for both of the adjunct jobs, I made sure to tell both department Chairs I was pregnant. Since the baby was not due until the middle of December, I felt confident I could fulfill my responsibilities to the college and have the baby following the end of the semester’s exams. I remember how nervous I was when I talked to the faculty about the pregnancy, although it was pretty obvious by the time I started classes.

At one of the colleges, the department Chair was female. Although she confided she chose not to have any children of her own, she thanked me for letting her know and assured me it was okay that I was going to have a baby in December. Interestingly, the department Chair at the other college was an elder man. Although he said he understood, his body signs let me know he was somewhat uneasy about the upcoming semester. I remember the difference between the two meetings. At the meeting with the female department head, she smiled, leaned into me, and took my hand. I remember her eyes lit up when she looked into mine and said, “Congratulations.” When I spoke face-to-face with the male department chair, the encounter was different. I remember he couldn’t stop looking down at my beginning-to-bulge belly. He would look up occasionally, nod, grin uneasily, and then stare down again. I remember feeling ashamed and embarrassed. I
tried to cover my body as much as possible. I stood before him, a young woman about to bear my first child, hoping to prove to him that I could also excel as a contingent faculty member.

The beginning of the semester started off well. I was the right age, was in great health, and was having a seemingly textbook pregnancy. I went to my checkups and took all of the advice of the doctors. However, about a month into the semester, it became clear that the pregnancy was going to be more stressful than anticipated.

At one of the routine ultrasound appointments, the doctors discovered that the baby was not measuring the right size. Also, the doctors noted I had very little amniotic fluid. At that point, the doctors decided they were going to monitor me closely. The close monitoring meant trying to fit in one to two doctor’s visits a week into my already crazy schedule. Although I was scared, I kept my mind busy with my faculty responsibilities. I wanted to show the colleges I could be a strong professional and a good mother. Many people, like my mother and my grandmother, sensed I was working too hard for too little and that I should concentrate on the pregnancy. I felt torn because I wanted to keep the baby safe but I also wanted to prove my abilities as a professional.

At the beginning of October, the risks of the pregnancy became even greater. At this point, the doctors made me come in once a day for fetal non-stress tests and ultrasounds. During this time, I still maintained my working commitments and attended all of my classes. However, I knew it was time to tell the department Chairs about the pregnancy and the possibility of not being able to finish out the semester.
Meeting with the department Chairs was one of the most stressful conversations I had in the beginning of my academic career. I remember how nervous I felt telling them about the high-risk pregnancy. Although it wasn’t my fault, I felt a huge responsibility towards the colleges and to myself. I tried to be strong in the meetings, but as I told them about the situation, my emotions overcame me. I told them that the doctors said I could work, but that I had to come into the doctor’s office everyday. I remember stressing to them that I would find a way to make the appointments not interfere with my teaching schedule. I told them that the doctors said the baby wasn’t growing at the rate it should and that it looked like my amniotic fluid levels were dropping. I told them that the doctors said they might have to induce the baby if the levels got too low, no matter how old the baby was.

At thirty-three weeks, the doctors became increasingly alarmed. At this time, in addition to the daily non-stress tests and ultrasounds, I had to go to the hospital for steroid shots. The shots were supposed to help the baby’s lungs grow so that she would have a chance at living if she were born too early. I remember how painful and humiliating the shots were. I remember standing in the hospital trying to be strong, but afraid of what was ahead.

Immediately following the shots, I called for an additional meeting with each of the department Chairs. I drove to each of the colleges and told them that I would continue to work for as long as I could, but that there was a chance I could go into labor at any second. At the meeting I brought an amended, detailed schedule of each day’s lesson plans. I promised that if I could not be in class, I would prepare all of the work for the
substitute and would complete all of the grading for the semester. Both Chairs agreed to find ways to cover the classes while I was away, but both Chairs wanted me to complete all of the grading for the course.

I carried Harper until thirty-four weeks, but then the check-up came where my levels dropped too far. As I lay on the table I remember the look of panic that came across the ultrasound technician’s face. She immediately left the room and returned with the neonatologist. The doctor came into the room, took one look at the ultrasound, and told me I was going to go in that day to have my baby. As I walked out of the office, my fingers trembled as I dialed the phone to call my husband. I remember also shuddering when I thought about how I was going to tell the faculty I would not be able to return to my classes.

As I checked into the hospital to deliver my baby, I remember walking into the room carrying my laptop. I knew I had schoolwork that had to be finished (I was also taking two classes for my PhD), emails that had to be written, and papers that had to be graded. I remember I used a great deal of the time in labor working. When Harper finally arrived, there was a cloud of fear in the room. I remember feeling satisfied I had accomplished some work before active labor began. Although I had imagined what childbirth would be like, I never dreamed it would include so many monitors and doctors and a sense of worry about my academic responsibilities. In addition to my husband and the two primary doctors, an entire staff from the neonatal intensive care unit hovered over me, monitoring both the baby and myself.
Harper was born weighing five pounds, one ounce. Even though there was so much stress during the pregnancy, the extra monitoring and steroids paid off. Harper didn’t have to go into the NICU and she got to stay and come home with me. Looking back, I can see how much my career and my schooling affected me. Harper was born at 12:21 am on a Saturday, following thirty-four hours of intense labor. At 7:00 the next morning, I was working on a paper and sending the emails to the department Chairs letting them know I wouldn’t be in my class on Tuesday.

My first few months with Harper are clouded with visions of grading papers and worrying about work. Since Harper was premature and was jaundiced, she had complications in her first months of life. We had to go into the hospital daily to check her bilirubin levels and her weight. Since she could not suck, she quickly dropped to four pounds and we thought she would have to go into the NICU after all. She didn’t have to go into the hospital, but she did have to drink pumped milk from a syringe every two hours. For the first six months, I had to pump twelve times a day for thirty minutes and she had to feed every two hours. I would hold the pump in one hand and grade papers in the other, all through the night. I remember being so tired and so overwhelmed. I felt like a failure to everyone. I managed to get through to December and to get my grades in on time. Although I wanted to take a break, I felt I had to work again at the beginning of the school year.

Since the semester Harper was born was my first semester working in North Carolina, I felt I had to go back to work in January in order to end my time as a contingent faculty member at the institution in a positive light. I didn’t want the school to
only be able to reference my first semester of working. Although it was with strong
disapproval from all of my friends and family, I returned working for very little pay in
January. The pay was so small I couldn’t afford to put Harper in childcare. Although I
only taught for six hours a week, the hours of childcare would have increased
significantly because of the additional office hours and hours of the commute. I didn’t
know what I was going to do.

One of the colleges I worked for was thirty minutes away from my grandmother.
Since she was the only family that was able to help me, she agreed to drive the thirty-
minutes to the college twice a week. During my classes, she kept Harper in the Wal-Mart
parking lot. She would pull down the back of her car and turn it into a traveling playpen.
After class, I would come back to Wal-Mart, pick up Harper and then drive her the hour
commute home. I remember feeling a tremendous amount of guilt during this semester. I
felt, again, I was letting everyone down. I felt like I was taking advantage of my
grandmother and putting her in a dangerous position. I felt like I was doing Harper a
disservice by making her be in the car for so many hours and for making her play in the
back of a car in a parking lot. I felt like I was letting down my students because I could
not be as involved in their student activities as I wanted to. I felt like I was letting the
college down because I realized teaching was not and could not be my first priority.

Following the end of the semester I realized I couldn’t be everything I wanted to
be. Something had to give. I decided to take a little bit of time off from adjuncting, but
chose to continue on with the professional degree as I stayed home with Harper. I worried
about the gap on my resume, but realized I had to be realistic. In order to be the best
mother I could be, I had to put the needs of my child in front of the wants of my own.

Fast-forward to present day. Today as I write this autoethnography, I have another
secret to share. I just found out on Sunday that I’m pregnant with my second child.
Although I knew I wanted children, and the pregnancy is not a surprise, I have very
mixed emotions about how being a mother to two children will affect my future career
goals. According to the pregnancy calculator, the baby is due July 1st. I am scheduled to
graduate with my PhD in May or August, most likely August of 2012. Therefore, before I
graduate, I will have moved to another state, my husband will have become a husband in
a dental practice, we will have bought our first house (a fixer-upper), and I will have had
two children. For the past few years, I have been reading a large number of articles about
women who either choose to work part-time in academia, or leave academia entirely. My
future in academia looks dim although I hope somehow I can make it all work.

I really want to be a professional in this field and I want to use my PhD, but I also
wanted two children, and I wanted to live in the same city where my husband has a better
paying job. What do I do? I’ve been struggling for a while about the degree, and finding
jobs, and working on professional papers because I don’t know what my end goal will be.
I don’t want to leave my family. Now I’ll have two children to pay for. I don’t know if I
can afford to work. Additionally, I don’t know if I can bear to leave them in childcare so I
can lose money in pursuit of a career I don’t even have.

In the last semester, I have worked a great deal on preparing my vitae for potential
job opportunities. Additionally, I applied for and was awarded a student travel grant to
travel to an autoethnography conference. I know I need to work on participating in conferences and preparing manuscripts and applying for jobs, but I am worried about how I’m going to be able to do it all. I don’t think I can be a Super Mom. Last week, I applied to three jobs in the area. Although I wasn’t sure if I would get the jobs, I felt it was important to keep my vitae up to date and apply for jobs. Two days after I submitted the resume, I found out I was pregnant. Now I don’t think I can take any of the jobs even if I get them. I don’t think it would be fair to only work at a job for six months before I leave for maternity leave. It seems that there is going to be a gap on the vitae that might be too hard to fill.

Next year, when I walk across the stage, I want my family to be proud of me. I want them to see what I have accomplished. I don’t want to be “just” a wife and a mother, but I have to do what’s right for my children. I can’t apply for a job in Kansas. I can’t work forty hours a week if I can’t afford childcare. I’m in a conundrum. I want to work and I want to contribute to society. Is being a contingent faculty member the answer? It might be my only answer. What more can I do? What are my goals? Where will my career and my identity as a mother lead me?

By writing a narrative inquiry about other women who are in a similar place and space as myself, I hope to find peace in my life choices and discover answers to the choices ahead. I hope that revealing myself through a narrative will allow others to find a place to question their own paths. I hope that the narrative inquiry will help me discover my way and help others find their right paths as I listen to their stories and find commonality amongst our voices.
Appendix B

Individual Interview One Protocol

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<th>Individual Interview One: (Individual Meeting with Participant) “Background and Goals”</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Covert Topics:</strong> I would like my individual interviews with my participant to flow organically. I plan on asking questions along the way that address specific research topics. However, I do not want to restrict the flow of the conversation, nor do I want the participant to feel like she cannot stray from the specific questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is your academic background?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why are you in your present academic position? How long have you been in this position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you receive support from home for your professional choices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are your long-term career goals? What are your long-term family goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How does having a family affect your short term and long-term career goals?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Introduction Question and Lead Question One:** How does your academic background and academic goals reflect your present position at this institution? |

| **Lead Question Two:** What were your goals when you started working at this institution and are they similar or different to what they are now? |

| **Lead Question Three:** What are some of the ways your family life affects your career choices? |

| **Lead Question Four:** Where do you see yourself in a year? five years? fifteen years? What do you see your family looking like during those times as well? |

| **Lead Question Five:** How has becoming a mother and having a family changed your short term and long-term career goals? |

| Follow-Up for Introduction Question:  |
| • When you say _______, what does that mean to you?  |
| • Will you explain ______________ , a little bit more?  |

| Follow-Up for Lead Question One:  |
| • Do you think that you are well suited for your job? Why or why not?  |
• Was your present job a career goal?
• How has your academic background helped your present position?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Two:
• How did that make you feel?
• What did you think about that?
• Why did you (like/dislike) this?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Three:
• How did that make you feel?
• How do you feel supported?
• Do you think your career choices would be different without a family? How?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Four:
• How did that make you feel?
• How do your professional goals affect your family goals?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Five:
• How does being a mother affect these goals?
• How does that make you feel?
• What do you think about that?
• How does being a mother affect these goals?
• Have you found a way to combine your academic and personal goals? If so, how?
### Individual Interview Two Protocol

**(Individual Meeting with Participant) “Support and Success”**

**Covert Topics:** I would like my individual interviews with my participant to flow organically. I plan on asking questions along the way that address specific research topics. However, I do not want to restrict the flow of the conversation, nor do I want the participant to feel like she cannot stray from the specific questions.

- What type of support do you receive from your school?
- What type of support do you receive to help with your child?
- How do you measure success?
- Academically, do you participate in publications, conferences, are you writing?
- At home, how do you feel working affects your role as a mother?

**Introduction Question:** Last time we talked a little bit about the support you receive from home. What type of support do you receive from your academic institution and do you feel it is adequate or inadequate?

**Lead Question One:** How do you think your goals align with the goals of the institution?

**Lead Question Two:** What type of outside support do you use with your child and how do you feel about that support? Is there any support within the institution? Why do you feel this way and do you think things need to change?

**Lead Question Three:** In what ways do you measure your professional and personal success? How has that changed since becoming a mother?

**Lead Question Four:** Are you supporting a particular research agenda with the school? If so, what is it? If not, why not? Do you think there is space in research for adjunct faculty members? Do you have outside research/publication interests and do you think your present position supports those interests?

**Lead Question Five:** As you align your own professional goals with those within the institution, how do you also navigate your goals as a mother?
Follow-Up for Introduction Question:
- When you say ________, what does that mean to you?
- Will you explain ______________, a little bit more?

Follow-Up for Lead Question One:
- You mentioned ________. How does that compare to other institutions?
- How does that make you feel?
- What do you think about that?
- Do you think there is a difference between the two-year college and four-year college’s goal for adjuncts, mothers, and women?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Two:
- What affect does childcare have on your professional career?
- How does that make you feel?
- Does the school offer any support?
- Why do you think things are that way?
- Do you see that changing in the future?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Three:
- How does that make you feel?
- How do your interests fit into your present academic career? Personal goals?
- How does lack of time/resources play in the picture?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Four:
- How does that make you feel?
- How are you aligning the goals?
- Why or why are you not participating in academic research?
- What would need to happen to make it easier to participate?

Follow-up for Lead Question Five:
- How does that make you feel?
- What do you think about that?
- Do you think there are both positives and negatives? What?
- What would you change, if anything?
Appendix D

Individual Interview Three Protocol

| Individual Interview Three:  
(Individual Meeting with Participant) “Treatment and Future Implications” |
<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Covert Topics:</strong> I would like my individual interviews with my participant to flow organically. I plan on asking questions along the way that address specific research topics. However, I do not want to restrict the flow of the conversation, nor do I want the participant to feel like she cannot stray from the specific questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you think you are treated differently at your institution than those around you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you have any suggestions about how the institution could support you, us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you like the idea of mentor groups or support groups? What would be some ideal ways the institution and the culture that surrounds you could help?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Introduction Question:** In what ways do you think we are treated differently because we are adjunct faculty members, women and mothers? In what ways do you think we are treated differently on all intersecting levels? |
| **Lead Question One:** What types of academic biases have you had to overcome within the academic setting? |
| **Lead Question Two:** If you feel we are treated differently, what do you think could be done about it; in what ways could the system change? |
| **Lead Question Three:** There is a concept “it takes a village” to raise a child; how do you think that resources, like mentor groups, could be helpful to your academic and personal goals? |

| Follow-Up for Introduction Question: |
| • When you say ________, what does that mean to you? |
| • Will you explain ______________, a little bit more? |

| Follow-Up for Lead Question One: |
| • Who do you feel it the most directly from: male/female faculty, peers, students? |
| • You mentioned ________. Can you tell me more about that? |
| • How did that make you feel? |
• What did you think about that?
• Do you tell your students you are a mother?
• Do others on campus know about your family life as well as your academic life?

Follow-Up for Lead Question Two and Three:
• How did that make you feel?
• Do you remember what you were feeling at the time you were treated differently?
• What did you do about that feeling?
• Were you aware of any risks for you?
• What did this feeling/experience mean to you?
• Is that or was that a “familiar” feeling?
• What were you thinking at that time or about the situation?
• What thoughts were you having about the other person at that time?
• Do you think there are ways to make the situation better?
• Do you like the idea of sharing your experiences with other new mothers?
• Do you have any other final suggestions?
Appendix E

IRB Approval for Pilot Study Two

January 20, 2012

Dr. Pamela Havice
Clemson University
School of Education
307 Tillman Hall
Clemson, SC 29634

SUBJECT: IRB Protocol # IRB2010-298 entitled "Navigating the World of Academia as a Mother and Contingent Faculty Member: A Narrative Inquiry"

Dear Dr. Havice:

Your amendment submitted to the IRB (Institutional Review Board) on January 9, 2012, has been approved by expedited review procedures on January 18, 2012. Your approval remains through November 7, 2012, the expiration of your approval period.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB’s approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent form. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately. Please contact the office if your study has terminated or been completed before the identified review date.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 864-656-6460 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Laura A. Moll, M.A., CIP
IRB Administrator
November 16, 2011

Dr. Pamela A. Havice
Clemson University
School of Education
307 Tillman Hall
Clemson, SC 29634

SUBJECT: IRB Protocol # IRB2010-298 entitled "Navigating the World of Academia as a Mother and Contingent Faculty Member: A Narrative Inquiry"

Dear Dr. Havice:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Clemson University has reviewed your request to continue the above-mentioned study using expedited review procedures. Approval for continuation of this study has been granted on November 2, 2011. Please find enclosed this letter your original, stamped consent document to be used with this protocol.

Your approval period is November 8, 2011 to November 7, 2012. Your next continuing review is scheduled for October 2012. Please refer to the IRB number and title in communication regarding this study.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately. Please contact the office if your study has terminated or been completed before the identified review date.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 656-6460 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Laura A. Moll, M.A., CIP
IRB Administrator

Enclosure
Appendix F

Query Letter

Good Morning,

My name is Kathryn Ledford and I am a PhD candidate in Educational Leadership at Clemson University. For my dissertation, I would like to study how mothers, with children under the age of six who are also contingent faculty members, navigate the world of academia through a narrative inquiry research study. The inquiry is based on a pilot study I conducted in the fall of 2010. Following that study, I decided to expand the research for the dissertation. I have approval from the IRB at Clemson to do so.

I am writing because I am trying to find research participants who meet this description. I am hoping you can help direct me towards potential participants who might be interested in working with me. If you either know of any women who meet this criteria, or if you know whom I should contact, I would greatly appreciate your help.

Thank you so much for helping me with my research.

Warmest Regards,

Kathryn Ledford
919.593.0442
ledford.katie@gmail.com
### Appendix G

**Table of Participant Description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2 year old</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13 year old, 25 and 18 month old</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3 year old</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11, 10, 5 year old</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2 year old; second baby due July 1, 2012</td>
<td>PhD, December 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


