IS THERE EVER A PERFECT TIME TO HAVE A BABY? A NARRATIVE STUDY OF DOCTORAL STUDENT MOTHERS MANAGING WORK AND FAMILY WHILE PURSUING A RESEARCH DOCTORATE

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ABSTRACT

This narrative study investigated how doctoral student mothers of young children manage the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood, the strategies they used and the conflicts they experienced when trying to achieve balance, their motivation to persist despite their many responsibilities, and how their experiences contribute to educational practice and policy.

Three bodies of literature were examined: feminist theories of gender roles and mothering, cultural constructions of motherhood, and motherhood and academia. Research that focused directly on the experiences of graduate and doctoral student mothers was critical to the theoretical framing of this study.

This study utilized snowball sampling to identify nine doctoral student mothers to participate in the study. The study used between two and four interviews and check-in conversations which lasted between one and a half and three and a half hours with each participant. Additionally, websites were reviewed and coding transcripts revealed frequent themes for balance, conflict, and motivation. Member checking, triangulation, and use of the participant's own words were utilized to add to the validity of the study.

The participants achieved a reasonable balance among their roles by utilizing time management and compartmentalization, delegation of childcare and household responsibilities, and accepting mentoring and support. Conflicts cited were financial constraints, health insurance, differences in cultural expectations, and structural lag; the delay that occurs when the changes in social structures do not occur as quickly as the changes in people's lives (Riley and Riley, 1994). The participants were motivated to pursue a research doctorate for a career as a professor, researcher, or higher education administrator. They chose to have children while pursuing a doctorate because of the flexible schedule of a graduate student, the "readiness" of

their relationship with their spouse or partner to welcome a child, and an overall idea of "if not now, then when" because there are always competing demands in life. Participants cited career and professional opportunities, financial security, health care benefits, and the desire to feel a sense of accomplishment and be a role model as motivations to persist while navigating the balance of work, school, and family. They stated that it was time to focus on their children, and that they would regret it if they did not complete the degree. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of these doctoral student mothers and to reveal how outdated ideas about ideal workers, ideal students, ideal mothers, and gendered norms are present in the campus climate and culture. The study is aimed at helping universities provide a better physical plan and an emotionally supportive environment for students.

I've yet to be on a campus where most women weren't worrying about some aspect of combining marriage, children, and career. I've yet to find one where men were worrying about the same thing.

- Gloria Steinem (b. 1934)

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CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Personal Positionality Statement

My experience as a graduate student mother was the inspiration for this dissertation. I am a married mother with three children, full-time college administrator, and part-time doctoral student who has been writing my dissertation for what seems like a lifetime. In many ways, I have received much support while trying to balance the responsibilities of work, school, and motherhood. With my first child, work provided paid leave for eight weeks, and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allowed me to take twelve additional weeks of unpaid leave without the fear of losing my job. My son was born during the semester, and my professors agreed to allow me to attend classes as long I felt capable and complete any assignments or exams after the semester was over. I took a similar leave after my second pregnancy and began work on my dissertation proposal soon after giving birth. At the time, I attempted to draft a proposal about academia and motherhood to relate to my personal responsibilities, and later, I began a proposal about electronic portfolios to relate to my work experience, but neither held my interest for long. In hindsight, I needed to be at a certain place as a feminist and a mother to propose this project. My personal story sets the tone of my dissertation as my lived experience is the motivation for this study.

As a mother of young children who is pursuing a research doctorate, I am both supported and challenged in these dual roles. I have worked full-time as a college administrator almost every day that I have been a mother and graduate student, and I have struggled to find work-life balance and feel like I was making forward progress in my life responsibilities. My husband is a true partner and shares in household chores, parenting responsibilities, and the work that is required to manage our home and family life. My children provide love, laughter, information

about pop culture, sports, and video games, and now that they are older and more independent, finally grant me a few uninterrupted minutes for research. My parents are active and healthy, encourage my academic pursuits, serve as examples of life-long learners, provide free after school and summer childcare, and are always willing to talk through hiccups in my research or writing.

Yet, I have friends and family who ask if I *have finally stopped that graduate work* and give looks of surprise, disdain, and bewilderment when I respond that I am still pursuing my degree. Some are surprised that I have not yet finished the degree, and others thought that I should withdraw because I struggle to meet the time commitment necessary to finish the degree. Throughout the years, mothers at school drop-off and colleagues with similar age children say "*my* children are *my* priority," as though I treat my children like they are unimportant or women who pursue an education do not make their children a priority. And there was one male classmate, a father, who shared how he completed doctoral work while working as a college administrator. He said that he did his classwork and dissertation writing on the weekend mornings, and his wife took care of the children because "that's her job." When I was younger, a professor suggested that I should wait to have children until I had completed my degree and obtained tenure, possibly because that was the choice she had made. Timing a pregnancy for alignment with the cycle of my doctoral program or job was never my concern. I was concerned about my physical and emotional health, ensuring my husband and I had a strong enough relationship and financial resources to support a child. I am challenged by the number of hours in the day, number of days in the week, and the number of activities I must accomplish between work, researching for and writing a dissertation, managing a household, and being an active and engaged mother, wife, daughter, friend, and citizen. I feel like I am the Cat in the Hat trying, not

nearly as successful as he is, to hold a fish in a bowl, books on my head, and wave a fan with my tail while bouncing on a ball. I wish there were a day between Saturday and Sunday and six additional hours in each day, two for writing, two for sleep, and two for quality time with my partner and children. And yet, I am still determined to "do it all" and finish my degree. I am mindful that finding a work-life balance is my biggest stress and challenge. Being a two-income household afforded my family steady and reliable income, health insurance, paid sick time, lengthy maternity leaves, the ability to build retirement savings, and afford a yearly vacation. Tuition remission allowed me to pursue a graduate degree tuition-free, paying only for college fees and books. I had a clean, private office where I could work, rest during lunch, express milk for my children when they were babies, and meet with the research participants of this study. Yet, when I had my first child in 2005, there were no public lactation spaces on campus, and when I inquired about maternity leave for students, I was instructed to register for class and speak with the faculty member teaching the class about the ability for flexibility with attendance, completing coursework, and taking the final exam. I was not made aware of, nor did I seek information about any formal policy related to students who had babies and needed a leave. Although my father brought my son to my workplace to have lunch with me, I did not feel comfortable bringing my child elsewhere on campus.

But the full-time employment that provided so many benefits also required evening and weekend hours, leaving less time to be with my family and dedicate to completing my doctorate. When reflecting upon my priorities, it has always been family, work, and graduate study, in that order. Coursework provided structure and strict deadlines, but the self-motivated and self-directed nature of dissertation research and writing was a challenge. Coupled with the increasing

demands of a growing family and more time-consuming employment, I struggled to meet the demands required of a doctoral candidate.

I am often not fully present in any role, and my internal dialogue told me that I was in the wrong place, doing the wrong thing, and that I should be prioritizing a different responsibility. When I was at work, I felt I should be home with the children or using that time to conduct research and write my dissertation. When I was writing and researching, I felt I should be playing with the children or responding to emails for work. When I was with my family, I felt I should be researching and writing my dissertation or focusing on the responsibilities of my job. For me, the self-help book advice to "be present where you are" was easier said than done because I never seemed to be in the right place.

Conversations with mothers of young children who are working and pursuing education have often revolved around the theme of balancing time and work required by motherhood, employment, and school. We exchanged life hacks, tips, and recipes and joked about the lack of sleep and need for coffee. And often, the conversations lead to questioning if it is worth the time, work, and struggle to pursue the three roles. It became evident that there was a need to investigate how student mothers manage the complexity of work, family, and doctoral study to provide understanding for current and future students and for faculty and administrators who guide practice and policy on the institutional level.

My experiences navigating motherhood, a doctorate, and full-time employment have affected the way I constructed this dissertation. I was a married, child-free, and professional when I completed my master's degree. When I started a doctoral program, I experienced many of the challenges traditional graduate students face regarding financial strain, work-life balance, time management, negotiating relationships with fellow students, faculty and administrators, and

meeting the expectations for scholarship needed to satisfy course requirements. After having a child, and eventually two more, my experience was that the challenges I experienced as a child-free adult were magnified exponentially: time management and the need to compartmentalize because of the endless time and attention children required and I wanted to dedicate; the additional costs of a larger family for an appropriate car, preschool, diapers, supplemental formula, and doctor's appointments; changing family dynamics with my husband taking a larger responsibility for evening and weekend childcare and household responsibilities; changing family dynamics with my parents providing daytime childcare; and my need for someone, anyone, to understand my struggle and be a mentor. Based on my experiences, I assumed that other doctoral student mothers had similar challenges and wanted to investigate the strategies they used and the conflicts they experienced while trying to achieve balance and their motivation to persist in order to add to the literature on work-life balance and student persistence.

Statement of the Problem

Women are bombarded with statistics and historically constructed ideologies on women's position in education and work, the role, responsibilities, and attributes of mothers, limitations of women's fertility in relation to age, and characteristics of the ideal student and worker. There is a large body of research on mothering and motherhood and a separate body of research on the experiences of women who pursue graduate study. There is scarce research on the experience of doctoral student mothers as they maneuver school, work, and motherhood. This is particularly pertinent to women pursuing higher education who are interested in mothering a child while pursuing a degree.

Since the Wellesley College and American Association of University Women's (1992) landmark study, "How Schools Shortchange Girls," girls have made great strides and exceeded

the academic achievement of their male counterparts. Today, girls are more likely to be valedictorians, receive straight A's, and enroll in college when compared to boys (Mundy, 2006). At the end of the 20th century, the fastest-growing population of university students was women with families (Home, 1998). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2018) data on graduates of the 2016-2017 academic year showed that women appear to be doing well in higher education. They earned 57.3 percent of bachelor's degrees, 59.4 percent of master's degrees and 53.4 percent of all doctor-level degrees. In many cases, time to degree completion is longer for women. The report, *Ph.D. Completion, and Attrition: Analysis of Baseline Demographic Data from the Ph.D. Completion Project*, showed that 55 percent of women who entered doctoral programs completed them within ten years, yet the same report showed that women were nine percentage points behind men when completing doctoral degrees within six years (Schmidt, 2008). Additionally, within the population of doctoral students who completed their degree within ten years, 25 percent of women and 18 percent of men finished between the seventh and tenth year (Schmidt, 2008).

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2018) data on graduates of the 2016-2017 academic year showed that 30 percent of doctoral students were between 30 and 39 years old, 20.2 percent were 40 or older, and 28.4 percent of doctoral students claimed dependents. In 2016, the median age for female doctoral recipients was 32 years old (National Science Foundation, 2017). A comprehensive study of students at the University of California at Berkeley by Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden (2013) found that 12 percent of women doctoral students had children and over two-thirds of the women surveyed believed that the best age to have a first child is between 28 and 34 years-old. The reported best age to have a first child, in some instances, occurs when women are pursuing a doctorate.

Research on women's fertility contends that pregnancies are most successful and healthy when women are younger than 35 years old and that women's best years for fertility and healthy pregnancies occur when they are in their 20's (American Society of Reproductive Medicine, 2012). Half of the doctoral students are over 30 years old, and with a large female population of graduate students pursuing doctorates at the optimal age for fertility and a healthy pregnancy, limitations of women's fertility must be considered.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) suggest that there is a negative narrative that makes roles of mother and professional, and student for purposes of this dissertation, incongruent and mothers cannot handle the competing responsibilities. Gardner (2009) suggests that the ideal student is male and unencumbered; women and students with children do not "fit" the mold. The ideal worker is also male and gives his full devotion to the responsibilities of his job (McClintock-Comeaux (2013). Student mothers face the ideology of intensive mothering, which demands total commitment to mothering (Hays, 1996). Hochschild (1989) explains that women have the responsibility of the "second shift," housework and childcare in the evenings and weekends after a day of paid labor. Mason et al. (2006) noted that graduate student mothers reported seven additional hours of paid and unpaid labor than graduate student fathers. Minimal incomes, a concern of all graduate students, can be insufficient to cover the additional costs of supporting a child. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture showed that yearly child-rearing expenses were more than $9,000.00 per year for married and single parents who made less than $59,200.00 per year and the child-rearing cost increased when parents earned more money (Lino, Kuczynski, Rodriguez and Schap, 2017).

Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) sum up women's dilemma, stating that "the challenge for women is even greater given the physical demands of motherhood, gendered expectations of

family obligations, and the ongoing disparity in which working women are on the 'second shift' through maintenance of children and home" (p. 489). They are confronted by the "motherhood bind" as they are challenged by balancing their work, school, and mothering responsibilities and have to prioritize, if not actually choose one over the other (Damaske, 2013).

There is a large body of research on mothering and motherhood and an expanding body of research on how motherhood affects mental health. There is a growing of research on women faculty and how they manage work and family. As women continue to excel in attaining degrees at all levels, there is an expanding literature on women's experiences in education, including doctoral education, yet there is minimal research on doctoral student mothers and their experiences maneuvering school, work, and motherhood.

Perhaps, with the competing demands of work, motherhood, and doctoral study, one could infer that they should not be experienced together. Yet, there are women with children or women having babies, who work and pursue doctoral degrees. Given the greater challenges, how do they manage the responsibilities of schoolwork and motherhood? What support and constraints do they experience? What motivates them to pursue and persist in a doctoral degree? Why do women choose to pursue these life experiences at the same time? This research is designed to develop greater insight on the experiences of doctoral student mothers so universities can better support this group of students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how doctoral student mothers manage the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood. Strategies used and conflicts experienced when managing the different roles, motivation to persist, and contribution to educational practice and policy by adding to the literature on work-life balance and student persistence were

investigated. This study is neither meant to essentialize motherhood nor infer that parenthood is a women's only ambition or responsibility. It is also not meant to promote heteronormativity, nuclear families, or exclude low-income, immigrant, international, cultural, or ethnic minority, LGBTQ+, and single mothers. I do assume though that the motherhood part of parenting is time-consuming, and becoming a mother through male/female union, adoption, surrogacy, artificial insemination or stepfamilies, can add to and transform a woman's life experiences, responsibilities, perspectives, and goals. Mothers who pursue doctoral degrees are a specific subset of students. Although they have overlapping concerns with all doctoral students, including women who do not have children and male graduate students with children, they also have unique concerns due to their positionality in their families, the academy, and in the ways that society frames the role of motherhood.

The experiences of student mothers and how they experience work-life balance while pursuing a research doctorate needs further investigation. Student demographics are continually changing, and more women, women with children, and older students are participating in doctoral study. This dissertation study contributes to the research on student persistence by focusing attention on the experiences of graduate student mothers of young children by describing their experiences finding work-life balance. By providing these women an opportunity to share their experiences, struggles, motivations, and recommendations, the data can be used to provide current and future doctoral student mothers with strategies for finding work-life balance. Additionally, findings can be used by university leaders to create a more inclusive culture and physical space for graduate student mothers.

By studying doctoral student mother's experiences with motherhood, family and childcare, financial concerns, work-family balance, institutional issues, faculty and advisors, and

motivation and management of work and family while pursuing a doctorate, my study sought to investigate how doctoral student mothers manage school, work, and motherhood to add to the literature and provide an understanding of these experiences for university leaders.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

How do doctoral student mothers manage and balance the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood?

1. What strategies do doctoral student mothers use to try to achieve a reasonable balance among their roles?
2. What conflicts do doctoral student mothers experience when managing their different roles?
3. What motivates women to persist in the doctoral program while simultaneously pursuing motherhood, work, and a doctoral degree?
4. What can an understanding of the experiences of mothers of young children who pursue school, work, and motherhood contribute to educational practice and policy?

These questions were developed to uncover the lived experiences and perceptions that influence work-life balance, persistence, motivation of mothers of young children who pursue a research doctorate, and how an understanding of their experience can contribute to educational practice and policy.

Definition of Terms

Three terms, work-life balance, young children, and doctoral student mothers, are defined in this section to show their specific use for this study.

Work-Life Balance: Reiter (2007) defines work-life balance as "achieving satisfying experience in all life domains to a level consistent with the salience of each role for the individual" (p. 77), The definition by Reiter (2007) was chosen because it promoted the individual's determination

of whether certain responsibilities are more important and did not assume balance means an equal amount of time allotted for each responsibility.

Young Children: For purposes of this study, young children are those five years of age and younger who are not attending free, compulsory education.

Doctoral Student Mothers: Doctoral student mothers are doctoral students, in any stage of degree completion, who either entered the program as a mother of a young child or became a mother through any means at any time during doctoral study.

Organization of the Document

In Chapter Two, I review the literature on gender roles, critiques of the motherhood mystique, and narratives of constraint and possibility in the pursuit of motherhood and academia. The literature on gender roles outlines both liberal and poststructural feminism as well as a feminist perspective to educational philosophy. Next, cultural constructions of motherhood, is presented. This includes a description of the motherhood mystique, intensive mothering, and counter ideology. Last, motherhood in academia is discussed. Discussion of ideal workers and students provide a narrative of constraint, yet consideration of life-course perspectives and gendered norms and cultural expectations suggest a narrative of possibility. I also provide findings from literature that describes the experiences of graduate students, and doctoral student mothers with regard to work-life balance including how they have been investigated and what knowledge they added, how they assisted in the development of this research project, and where there are still gaps in the literature.

In Chapter Three, I review the research questions, provide information on the research site, and discuss traits of snowball sampling, the sampling method used to gather research participants. Narrative methodology as an appropriate research method for the population

studied, as well as the processes for collecting and analyzing data are discussed. Included are also a chart with participant demographic information and a review on how validity was maintained.

In Chapter Four, I present narratives of the nine participants, the strategies used and conflicts they experienced while trying to balance the responsibilities of motherhood, work and doctoral study, and their motivation for choosing to combine the motherhood and doctoral education. The narratives also include information about the participants, including a timeline for completing their degrees, and career goals after degree completion.

In Chapter Five, I answer the first three research questions about the strategies doctoral student mothers use to achieve balance, conflicts they experience when managing their different roles, and their motivation to persist while managing and balancing the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood.

Last, in Chapter Six, I compare and contrast the findings discussed in Chapter Five to the literature presented in Chapter Two and answer the fourth research question by providing information on how an understanding of work-life balance and motivation of doctoral student mothers can contribute to educational practice and policy.

CHAPTER II: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter examines three bodies of literature related to the experiences of doctoral student mothers with school, work, and motherhood. First, I cover feminist theories of gender roles and mothering through discussion of liberal and poststructural feminist theories. Then I give an overview of critiques in the literature of the motherhood mystique. Cultural constructions of motherhood, including the ascendant ideology intensive mothering and responses to that ideology, will be explored. This will provide a theoretical perspective of how women maneuver and integrate the responsibilities of motherhood. Next, drawing on the notion of narratives of constraint and possibility outlined by Ward and Wolf-Wendel, I describe the literature on perspectives of motherhood in academia. The framework for research by Ward and Wolf-Wendel on how faculty mothers manage work and family from pretenure through mid-career is used to examine the life experiences of doctoral student mothers, and how they manage and balance the responsibilities of school, work, and home. To conclude the discussion of motherhood in academia, literature that focuses directly on the experiences of graduate and doctoral student mothers is examined.

Gender Roles

Discussion of gender roles will focus on literature about feminist theory as feminist theory considers how gender shapes power. Feminist theory focuses on the pervasive historical and societal inequality of women. Issues of gender roles will be revisited later in the literature review with an examination of gendered norms and cultural expectations as they too examine how power is shaped by gender. Gendered norms and cultural expectations focus on expected behavior and roles on the basis of gender.

The various approaches to feminist theory, including existentialist, liberal Marxist, postmodern, psychoanalytical, radical, and socialist, have critiqued established gender roles and patterns in society. Allan (2011) suggests that all feminist theories have the following assumptions in common:

1. Sex and gender inequality exists and is central to social relations and the structure of social institutions.
2. Sex and gender inequality are not "natural" or essential but a product of social relations.
3. Sex and gender inequality should be eliminated through social change (Allan, 2011, p.18).

The differences in theories are situated in how they characterize the inequalities, the sources and ramifications of oppression, and the approaches needed for change. This literature review will focus on liberal and poststructural feminist theories. It will also examine Martin's (1994) feminist perspective to educational philosophy.

Liberal feminism asserts that there should be the same rights and opportunities for women as there are for men arguing that individual rights and a just society are crucial to eliminating gender-based discrimination (Tong, 1989). Power is considered a finite resource, and for women to have power, it must be allocated equally. Liberal feminism developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a response to industrialization, as women, specifically privileged women, were excluded from the public sphere. Writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for equal education, liberties, and opportunities for women (Tong, 1989)

The second wave of feminism occurred in the twentieth century with the publication of Betty Friedan's (1974) book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Critiqued as relating mostly to middle-class white women, it uncovered the widespread unhappiness of housewives despite the financial security provided by marriage and motherhood. These women lived in a culture that propagated the idea that their happiness and life fulfillment should be found through housekeeping and

childrearing. Friedan (1974) suggested that women not live through the experiences of their children or spouses, but instead do meaningful work to be self-actualized beings.

Liberal feminists of the twentieth century did not suggest that women dismiss marriage or motherhood. Instead, Friedan wrote, "the assumption of your own identity, equality, and even political power does not mean you stop needing to love…or that you stop caring for your own kids" (Friedan, 1974, p. 380). She wrote that housework should be done "quickly and efficiently" so that women have time for "creative work" outside of the home (Friedan, 1974, p. 330). Friedan suggested that marriage and motherhood, although part of a woman's life, should not constitute her entire identity. Although she pushed women into the public sphere, she did not suggest that women include men in the private sphere. Women were encouraged to gain an education and engage in the workforce, yet men were not encouraged to enter the private sphere and share housework and parenting responsibilities. One must question if true equality can occur if one group, women, is shouldering the burden of home and childcare responsibilities.

Poststructural feminist thought is a critique of liberal feminist thought and challenges ideas "of personhood conceptualized as rational, coherent, and essential self or subject" and power as a finite object to be possessed (Allan, 2011, p. 29). Feminist poststructuralism "is a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes, and institutions to understand existing power relationships and to identify areas for strategies and change" (Weedon, 1997, p. 40). With a focus on discourse, power, and subjectivity, it provides another way to think about "the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness with a focus on how power is exercised and on the possibilities of change" (Weedon, 1997, p. 19). Language does not have a fixed meaning and instead is fluid and subjective. Poststructural feminist theory challenges the status quo and is a

key theory when evaluating gender, influence, and contribution to educational practice and policy.

Feminist philosopher Jane Roland Martin (1994) was one of the first educational philosophers to give a feminist perspective to educational philosophy. She envisioned gender encompassing education and curriculum. She believed that women were systematically excluded from discussions of the philosophy of education as proven by the purposeful disregard of authors such as Catherine Beecher, Charlotte Perkins Gilman Wollstonecraft's challenge of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of the education of girls, and by the scientific theories and intellectual disciplines that were partial and did not favor women. Regarding the public and private dichotomy, the private sphere, comprised of women and children with its focus on family life and child-rearing was something to overcome, and the public sphere comprised of men focusing on civilized society and production was idolized. Martin (1994) argued that definitions of education "exclude the teaching, the training, and the socialization of children which women throughout history have had primary responsibility" (p. 41) and instead favor the education provided by teachers located in schools in the public sphere. She advocated for the redrawing of boundary lines of education, a new definition of what comprised an educated person, for the curriculum to be enriched by the experiences of women and reproductive processes of society to better benefit both boys and girls, and dismantling the traditional division of labor propagated by patriarchal society.

Critiques of the Motherhood Mystique

Mothering is defined as "a socially constructed set of activities and relationships involved in nurturing and caring for people" (Forcey, 1994, p. 357), and mothering is associated with women. Historically, being mothers has been the primary identity for women; although not all

women are mothers. The idea of the "good mother" is prevalent in the literature on mothering. There are two discourses on motherhood, the selfless, stay-at-home, full-time mother and the best-of-both worlds, Supermom, working mother. The selfless, full-time, stay-at-home mother places the care of her child above all else and the concept has been "constructed, performed, and reinforced through a matrix of social systems such as the media, the state, religious doctrine, and 'empirically based' psychological and medical studies" (Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Raddon, 2002, p. 394). The idea of the selfless mother is discussed in the motherhood mystique and the research of Hays's (1996) description of intensive mothering, which is the predominant ideology of motherhood in literature and by which women's mothering is evaluated. Feminist research suggests that this ideology is enmeshed in the concept of the "heterosexual nuclear family" that is white and middle-class (Arendell, 2000).

Becoming a mother is a transformational event in a woman's life. According to Hays (1996), Hoffnung (1989), Johnston-Robledo (2000), Oakley (1974) as cited in Crawford (2006), the four tenets of the motherhood mystique are:

1. Motherhood is the ultimate fulfillment of a woman. It is a natural and necessary experience for all women. Those who do not want to mother are psychologically disturbed, and those who want to but cannot are fundamentally deprived.
2. Women are instinctively good at caregiving and should be responsible for infants, children, elderly parents, home, and husband. Good mothers enjoy this kind of work; a woman who doesn't is maladjusted or poorly organized.
3. A mother has infinite patience and the willingness to sacrifice herself for her children. If she does not put her own needs last, she is an inadequate mother.
4. A woman's intense full-time devotion to mothering is best for her children. Women who work are inferior mothers (Hays, 1996; Hoffnung, 1989; Johnston-Robledo, 2000; Oakley, 1974, as cited in Crawford, 2006, p. 312).

This ideology of motherhood is not inclusive of all women. Many women find fulfillment without motherhood, and many mothers engage in paid employment outside of the home, some for reasons of financial necessity and others as a personal choice because they enjoy paid

employment, the ability to use the skills and education they have worked so hard to obtain, or because they think it makes them a better mother to have a professional life separate from their family. The motherhood mystique helps perpetuate women's financial dependence on men and the idea that men and women should operate in separate spheres, public for men and private for women. Furthermore, it is heteronormative and presumes that mothers live as part of a nuclear family, yet not all women who are mothers are married or partnered with men, as some are single or married or partnered with other women.

The level of care that only a mother can provide is linked to the notion of intensive mothering, a historically constructed ideology of mothering that is analyzed by Sharon Hays (1996). According to Hays (1996), the ideology of intensive mothering is three-fold. First, mothers are the primary caregivers of children. She posits that "there is an underlying assumption that the child absolutely requires consistent nurture by a primary caretaker and that the mother is the best person for the job. When the mother is unavailable, it is other women who should serve as temporary substitutes" (p. 8). Second, appropriate child-rearing is "*child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally-absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive*" (p. 8, italics in text). Mothers must devote an abundance of time, energy, and money to their children. Childrearing dominates the time and resources of the mother. Mothers must respond to all the needs of the child, be knowledgeable about child development, for example, when children should reach developmental milestones. Lastly, each child is invaluable; "outside the scope of market valuation" (p. 8), more important than paid work, and [it is] unacceptable for an employer to expect his or her employee to put the needs of her job before the needs of her child.

Intensive mothering positions women as self-sacrificing and all-caring with limited authority in the public and professional arenas and assumes that this is the proper ideology for

contemporary mothering for all. When asked how tradition, genetics, and nature or nurture participated in positioning them as the primary parent, women interviewed by Hays said that "they feel a deep commitment to their children and that they do not experience this feeling as something men imposed on them" (p. 107). Hays concluded that understanding the ideology or logic that created this commitment was important to gain a fuller understanding of contemporary motherhood. Intensive mothering does not just continue for mothers who choose to leave paid employment and care for their own children. It also continues for working mothers. To live up to the 'good mother' standard, they compensate for the time when they are at work by using their non-working hours to lavish their children with time and attention and perpetuating the cycle of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996).

The opposite concept of the selfless, stay-at-home mother is the "best of both worlds" mother (Raddon, 2002), the mother who is "having it all," (Hughes, 2002), "Supermom" (Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Kaplan, 1992), or "working mother" (Dillaway & Paré, 2008). These mothers are depicted as "gaining a measure of independence by 'juggling' a career with part-time mothering" (Raddon, 2002, p. 394). Throughout time, the work of many working mothers has gone unrecognized. Thompson and Walker (1989) suggest that before the 1940s, "the labor force participation of working-class and minority women was ignored, while middle-class women earned money in ways that were concealed from the economy" (p. 850). Glenn (1994) writes that mothering is racialized; historically, Black, Mexican-American, Native American, Chinese, and Japanese mothers did mothering and domestic work for affluent white families. These women overlooked their own children and families, which allowed affluent white women to manage a household staff, enjoy the benefits of motherhood without the labor, and pursue careers. More recently, childcare workers are often women from the Caribbean and Latin

America, and African-American women and many immigrant women from the Philippines, Latin America, and the Caribbean work as health aides in residences and nursing homes caring for elderly white people (Glenn, 1994).

In the 1970s feminist activists helped achieve legislation protecting working mothers including Title IX, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Today, a large proportion of mothers are working mothers. The U.S. Department of Labor (2020) reports that in 2019, 62.3 percent of mothers with children under the age of three, 66.4 percent of mothers with children under the age of six, and 72.3 percent of mothers with children under the age of eighteen participated in the labor force. Yet, Johnston and Swanson (2006) report that working mothers are portrayed negatively, and the "dismissal of this group as "reluctant mothers" or "nonconformists" only serves to perpetuate the mystique of intensive mothering and its myth of the incompatibility of employment and "good" mothering" (p. 511). Additionally, feminist research suggests that all other types of mothers, including any women who work outside the home, immigrants, cultural and ethnic minorities, lower-income, unmarried or divorced, and lesbians get characterized as "bad" or "deviant" (Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Arendell, 2000).

Johnston and Swanson (2006) investigated how mothers form worker-parent identities within the framework of different philosophies of motherhood by interviewing mothers about "cultural and personal mothering expectations," "work-family tensions" and how mothers actually do and feel about how they integrate and separate their work and family responsibilities (p. 512). At-home mothers reported "being there," being available to their children and giving them copious amounts of time as a "good mother," but also reported being lonely and lacking connection and communication with other adults. Mothers who were part-time workers

described good mothering as effective communication and maintaining quality family time. They were happy, believed time away from their children allowed them to be better mothers, and felt balanced in their responsibilities. Full-time employed mothers believed that good mothering involved empowering their children and giving quality time, yet they reported feeling pulled in many directions and upset about not spending the time they wanted with their children. The at-home mother has only the home sphere. The part-time employed mothers felt that they managed well in separate spheres, but the full-time employed mothers reported that maintaining separation of their spheres was difficult and they were often stressed out and overwhelmed by the blurring of work and home spheres. Johnston and Swanson (2006) pointed out that their study participants were privileged women and their results say little about "the identity construction of Women of Color, women living in poverty, lesbian mothers, or women with limited employment options or flexibility because of less education" (p. 517). The voices of these women are generally lacking in research.

Dillaway and Paré (2008) imply that there is pressure on stay-at-home mothers to defend their mothering, and that mothers do that through language. The authors suggest that popular culture presents the stay-at-home mother as a "career choice" and describes the home as a "workplace" where there are tasks to accomplish, deadlines to meet, the labor is exhausting, and management skills are required. "Every mother is a working mother…just at home and for no pay" is the sentiment used to illustrate "that stay-at-home mothers *do* work" (Dillaway and Paré, 2008, p.448). The authors point out that most mothers engage in both mothering and paid labor though, so perhaps the dichotomy in discussions of stay-at-home and working mothers does not accurately reflect the reality of work and mothering.

Dillaway and Paré (2008) emphasize the realities of parenthood, culture, economics, and paid work are diminished in the conversations about the career choice of both stay-at-home mothers and working mothers. There is not a strict separation of home and work spheres and that the decision to be a stay-at-home mother or working mother is not narrow and delineated. Issues such as unemployment, inflation, cost of childcare, and workplace culture play a part in whether mothers stay home or work. Dillaway and Paré (2008) suggest that the issue of mothering and work is more involved when discussing factions of women who have never had the choice to be stay-at-home mothers, namely women who are cultural and ethnic minorities and are lower-income.

Williams (2000) discussed the gender system of domesticity and provided a critique of both intensive mothering and ideal worker norms. She argues that conventional ideologies of families or work do not benefit people. Williams (2000) calls for three shifts for a new "reconstructive feminism" or "family humanism" paradigm (p. 4). This new paradigm would dismantle the concept of the ideal worker in businesses and within "family entitlements" and adjust ideas about gender (p. 5). Adjusting the ideal worker image in business would value family and allow for more part-time and flexible work arrangements that would allow parents to care for their children without resources and relying on daycare and nannies. Williams (2000) asserts, "what we need is not a mommy track, but market work restructured to reflect the legitimate claims of family life" (p. 5). The second shift addresses family entitlements, specifically how they are distributed should divorce occur. Since there is value in caregiving, the worker would "own" the wage earned (p. 5). Lastly, Williams suggests a change in the way gender is discussed. The discussion needs to move away from dominance and power and focus on equality.

Christopher (2012) identifies “extensive mothering” as the response to Hays's (1996) concept of intensive mothering and the concept of the ideal worker. Christopher’s (2012) study of employed, married and single mothers investigates how the mothers maneuver intensive mothering and the ideal worker ideology and often dismiss them to create their own concept of good mothering. Single mothers felt less committed to the ideals of intensive mothering because, as the sole financial supporter of their family, they had to work for survival. Both married and single mothers confirmed their own need to work for the personal satisfaction, enjoyment, and sense of societal impact they received from working. Single mothers also cited independence from family as an important aspect of working, and married mothers stated it created an equal power dynamic with their spouses. The mothers took issue with the “child first” aspect of intensive mothers and the expectation that the child should be a mother’s primary concern. An interesting distinction of extensive mothering from intensive mothering was the delegation of childcare responsibilities. Christopher (2012) noted that the mothers delegated these to other women who work as personal nannies or childcare workers; still reinforcing the traditional concept that women are the choice caregivers for children.

Motherhood and Academia: Narratives of Constraint and Possibility

In my study of doctoral student mothers, I draw heavily on the work of Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012), namely their longitudinal study of how women manage work and family when first they are pre-tenured faculty with children under five-years-old and later when they are post-tenured faculty and their children are older. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) argue that the existing narrative present in the literature about family and work in academia is negative and is a “narrative of constraint” (p. 28). It proposes that the roles and responsibilities of mother and tenure-track faculty member are not congruent and presents a bleak picture of the possibility of

succeeding as both a tenure-track faculty member and mother. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) propose a counternarrative based on lived experiences of women who have managed the culture of both academia and motherhood from pre-tenure through mid-career. The counternarrative is a "narrative of possibility" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 28) and encompasses theory of life-course perspectives (Han & Moen, 1999), career stages of faculty (Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981), liberal (Tong, 1989; Friedan, 1974) and poststructural feminist theories (Allan, 2011; Weedon, 1997), and gendered norms and cultural expectations related to work and family in the creation of a theoretical framework.

For purposes of this dissertation, I thought critically about the theoretical framework developed by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) and how it could be altered and applied to examine the life experiences of doctoral student mothers of young children and how they manage work and family while pursuing a research doctorate. Although there is overlap in the experiences of doctoral student mothers and faculty in regards to work-life balance, differences reside in relationships with advisors, financial insecurity, and ambiguity in one's career prospects (Springer, Parker, & Levison-Reid, 2009) which needed to be evident in a theoretical framework for this dissertation.

For this dissertation, the "narrative of constraint," the negative narrative, is based on ideal student norms and ideal worker norms. In conjunction, these concepts propose that work and pursuit of a doctoral degree with motherhood are incompatible, as each role requires full dedication.

According to Gardner (2009), traditionally, prior to the 1960s, graduate students were "almost entirely white, affluent, Protestant, and male" (p. 31-32), and the demographic changed little between 1900 and 1960 when men, respectively, were 94 and 89 percent of all doctoral

students. Although women now receive the majority of degrees, a study of graduate student socialization shows that not all graduate students "fit the mold" including "women, students of color, older students, students with children, and part-time students" (Gardner, 2007, p. 130). These students find that the structure of the university and degree, feeling different, and poor communication and relationships with others affect their overall enjoyment and assimilation in their programs and cite sexist attitudes and a male-dominated environment with few female faculty members as reasons they did not "fit the mold," which leads to high attrition rates for these populations (p. 130). Identity development and socialization as a graduate student is important. Golde (1998) describes the socialization as a progression

> in which a newcomer is made a member of a community – in the case of graduate students, the community of an academic department or a particular discipline. The socialization of graduate students is an unusual double socialization. New students are simultaneously directly socialized into the role of the graduate student and are given preparatory socialization into graduate student life and future career (Golde, 1998, p. 56).

In addition to ideal student norms, the negative narrative, the narrative of constraint, is also based on ideal worker norms. According to McClintock-Comeaux (2013), the concept of the ideal worker includes an utmost dedication to one's work with clear and strict compartmentalization of one's responsibilities, so family and personal commitments do not infringe on one's paid employment. The concept of the ideal worker is constructed from the firm delineation of men's and women's responsibilities specifically that men can commit to work because women are committed to home and family. Ideal workers are often those in management or leadership positions who want their supervisor to know that they are willing to work long, exhausting hours, and are seeking additional responsibilities that will lead to opportunities for advancement. Expectedly, ideal workers are male. Thus this version of the

ideal worker is challenging for women because ideal mothers dedicate themselves to their children and women need leave from work to recover from childbirth.

The counternarrative, a narrative of possibility, is based on life perspectives, liberal and poststructural feminist theories, and gender norms and cultural expectations. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) grant that pipeline arguments were one-dimensional when considering the claim that more mothers in the academic workforce would expel the challenges mothers face. I contend that the same is true for doctoral student mothers. Literature on life perspectives, a three-stage model of doctoral student persistence, and gendered norms and cultural expectations will be discussed as feminist theory has already been addressed.

Life-course perspective refers to the integrative study of people's lives, specifically how aspects of one's life are prioritized depending on one's phase of life (Han & Moen, 1999). When discussing work and family, Han and Moen (1999) suggest that the increase of women in the workforce, particularly married women and mothers of young children, have changed both the work setting and families. Using United States Census data, they cite that 12 percent of married women with children under six years of age worked in 1950, but 64 percent were working by 1995. That statistic remains steady today. In 2018, the workforce rate for mothers with children under six years old was 65.1 percent and 76.4 percent for those with children between six and seventeen (U. S. Department of Labor, 2019). Because of the large percentage of women with children of all ages in the workforce, the traditional public/private dichotomy is outdated (Han & Moen, 1999). Working mothers often carry the burden of the "second shift;" they perform a full day of paid labor and then perform a second shift of working at home when caring for their families (Hochschild, 1989). The same is true for graduate student mothers. According to

Mason et al. (2006), graduate student mothers spend 102 hours per week on paid and unpaid work while graduate student fathers spent 95 hours.

A "structural lag" occurs when social structures lag behind the changes in people's lives (Riley and Riley, 1994). Riley and Riley (1994) advocate for a society where both women and men work and assume responsibility for the family. They would classify the second shift as a structural lag. Han and Moen (1999) suggest that "new institutional arrangements or structuring occupational trajectories, creating greater flexibility and more options in career development and progression for both men and women" are needed (p. 109). Han and Moen note that there is still not a consensus on what the new arrangements should be and working couples still encounter structural lag.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) suggest that life-course perspectives also address how people perceive and explain their work and careers. They present research by Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) about the five stages of faculty careers spanning from new assistant professors to full professors who are near retirement. Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) theorize that as faculty progress through the career stages, they have more control over their work and better opportunity to balance their work and family life. The same may be true for doctoral students and I utilize Tinto's stages of doctoral persistence to categorize student progress.

Tinto (1993) presents a three-stage model of doctoral student persistence. Stage one encompasses the first year of study when students transition and adjust to graduate study. During the first stage, interactions with faculty and students, both formal and social, influence students. The second year of study through doctoral candidacy encompasses the second stage of doctoral student persistence. This stage includes the most coursework, a qualifying exam, and a dissertation proposal defense. During this stage, students learn how to conduct research. The

final stage includes conducting research, determining results, showing application of those results, and defending the completion and conclusions of the dissertation. Perhaps, as students' progress through the degree and transition from faculty-focused coursework to self-directed research, they may have better opportunities to balance work, school, and mothering responsibilities in their lives.

Gendered norms and cultural expectations, also called gender roles, are ideas about how men and women should behave and the roles they should take on in society. They are often stereotypical, women as homemakers and nurturers in the private sphere, and men as workers and producers in the public sphere. Four gendered norms are particularly pertinent to the work-life balance of graduate student mothers: gender schemas, male time clocks, greedy institutions, and bias avoidance. These gendered norms critique the workplace, provide perspective of how women manage the intersectionality of work and family (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), and will be described below to complete the discussion of narratives of constraint and possibility.

Valian (2005) provides a simple explanation of gender schemas: "The gender schemas that we all share result in our overrating men and underrating women in professional settings, only in small, barely visible ways those small disparities accumulate over time to provide men with more advantages that women" (p. 198). Gendered schemas are found in settings that promote and pursue gender equality, like colleges and universities, yet the people there hold hidden biases that they may not even be cognizant of (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). An example of a gender schema is a pay gap for women. Overall, women working full-time make 80.7 percent of their male counterparts (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Glauber (2007) tells us that this pay gap contributes to the motherhood penalty, that women who are mothers and work full-time are paid less than non-mothers and men, are viewed negatively, and considered

neglectful of their parenting responsibilities. Budig and England (2001) outline five causes of a wage gap for mothers: (1) disruption of full-time employment to care for children, (2) taking lower-paying, "mother-friendly" jobs that allow for greater balance, (3) lower productivity, (4) discrimination against mothers, and (5) attributes of individual women such as minimally educated women having children at a young age or less professionally ambitious women having a large number of children that creates "a correlation between earning and the presence of children that is not causal" (p. 210). The wage penalty leads to lower lifetime earnings and retirement income for mothers (Budig & England, 2001). This penalty is not true for fathers though. Fathers experience the opposite, a fatherhood premium. Men who are fathers and work full-time are paid more than their single counterparts and viewed positively for having parenting responsibilities (Glauber, 2008).

Undervaluing women does not only happen in the workplace, it happens in all areas including school. For example, faculty may question doctoral student mother's devotion to academia (Trepal, Stinchfield, & Haiyasoso, 2014) and student mothers may feel faculty do not provide the mentoring or role models they need (Mason & Goulden, 2004). Graduate student mothers may perceive that their parent status is the reason they do not receive internship positions or research opportunities granted to their childless classmates and they may be challenged by the rigidity of academic policies (Mason & Goulden, 2004).

Hochschild (1975) suggests that the tenure clock is based on a male time clock. Grant et al. (2000) explain that the academic career timeclock is male and assumes that men are free from the family responsibilities that affect the responsibilities of women. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) argue that the ideal academic trajectory is based on "men's normative path and assumes freedom from competing responsibilities such as family, that generally affect women more than

men" (p. 237). The male clockwork standard leaves women increasingly "disadvantaged" (p. 237) as the family responsibility falls disproportionally to women and continues the idea that pursuing both academic work and parenting is conflicting and unfavorable. I suggest that male time clocks also command the timeline for doctoral study. With a traditional career trajectory of doctoral students to college professor, doctoral study often occurs during the years when women are in prime reproductive health to bear children. Women receive the majority of degrees, yet also have high attrition rates (Gardner, 2008). Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) suggest that due to family responsibilities, student mothers might need to "extend or suspend" their progress to degree completion (p. 41). Although maternity leaves are available to students, they may feel that that academia is unfriendly upon their return, and they may lose much-needed funding and research opportunities, particularly if they attend on a part-time basis (Trepal et al., 2014).

Greedy institutions "make total claims on their members and…attempt to encompass within their circle the whole personality…they seek exclusive and undivided loyalty" (Coser, 1974, p. 4). Both academia and parenthood are greedy institutions because for each "demands are especially fervent, requiring total commitment" (Coser, 1974, p. 4). Doctoral study requires hours of studying, research, and teaching in preparation for a faculty position after degree completion. Parenthood, particularly motherhood, is a greedy institution because of the unbalanced responsibilities of the second shift. Hochschild (1989) explains that in heterosexual marriages, women often split their time between paid employment, housework, and childcare, and men split their time between paid employment and childcare. The time-sensitive tasks and just sheer number of hours necessary to accomplish them make the women's work at home a second shift. The childcare men and women take responsibility for is different. Men's childcare focuses on time-flexible play and fun excursions while women's childcare focuses on time-

dependent chores like feeding meals, bathing, and helping with homework, as well as "mental load" responsibilities like organizing doctor's appointments, extracurricular activities, and play dates. Additionally, mothers are responsible for the bulk of housekeeping, including cleaning, shopping, and cooking, daily or weekly responsibilities, while men are responsible for maintenance issues at the home which occur much less frequently and are more flexible in terms of a time table to accomplish (Hochschild (1989)

Drago, Colbeck, and Stauffer (2006) explain that bias avoidance strategies are "behaviors designed to escape potential career penalties associated with caregiving commitments" (p. 1223). Bias avoidance strategies can be productive or unproductive, depending on whether or not they increase or advance career outputs or achievements. For example, requesting a flexible work schedule to accommodate childcare and family responsibilities and increase productivity when working is a positive bias avoidance strategy. Not requesting flexibility out of fear of disapproval from supervisors or coworkers, fear of being passed over for promotions, fear of missing career opportunities, or fear of not receiving a raise, and then scrambling to accommodate an inconsistent work and personal schedule is an unproductive bias avoidance strategy. Drago et al. (2006) study of bias avoidance strategies among chemistry and English faculty yielded three conclusions: bias avoidance strategies both occurred and were commonplace in academia; bias avoidance strategies were gendered and practiced more by women than men; use of bias avoidance strategies were linked to the support from one's supervisor; specifically, that use of bias avoidance was lower for faculty with a supportive supervisor.

Research on Graduate Students and Graduate Student Mothers

Studies focusing on academically persistent doctoral student mothers, non-completers, high rates of attrition in doctoral programs, integration of mother and student identities, and work-life balance were critical to the conception and development of this study. The effect of involving students in academic life and faculty mentoring and role modeling on attrition rates was present in research on graduate students (Lovitts, 1996; Underwood, 2002; Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, & Ülkü-Steiner, 2006). Tinto (1993) found that doctoral student persistence is, in part, dependent on academic and social integration with academic departments and campus student life. Lovitts's (1996) study of non-completers of doctoral programs linked high attrition rates to a lack of social and academic integration for doctoral students, and suggested offering departmental conferences, brown-bag lunches, and speaker events to create opportunities for formal and informal connections between faculty and students. The study also suggested increased faculty mentoring of graduate students and more broad-based and longitudinal studies of student persistence. Participants in Underwood's (2002) study reported bias due to comments made by both faculty and fellow students, believing that they were passed over for research, career developments, and resume-boosting opportunities such as fellowships and conference presentations because of their motherhood status. Underwood's (2002) participants found academic success yet struggled to socially integrate with faculty and fellow students. Many participants, though, found the support and connections they needed with other mothers, spouses, and support groups outside the university. Additionally, the participants identified a lack of lactation space and childcare facilities on campus as challenges. Kurtz-Costes, et al. (2006) investigation of the role of gender in doctoral student's academic experiences examined the gender of the student, faculty advisor, and composition of the department faculty to learn if

gender composition could be linked to student attrition. The researchers maintained the argument that women, more than men, were concerned with having both a career and family. Women students reported that they appreciated "having a woman mentor who modeled the lifestyle – combining family and a successful career" and "when faculty validated the importance of personal relationships and family matters and helped students find a balance between personal and professional lives" (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006, p. 152). This study suggested a remedy, strong faculty mentoring, to the challenges faced by the students researched by Lovitts (1996) and Underwood (2002). These research studies informed my study about the importance of student engagement and involvement in academic life and faculty mentors as role models to increase persistence for doctoral student mothers.

In developing themes for my study I was informed by the work of Sears (2001), Lynch (2008), Tiu Wu (2013) and Demers (2014) regarding ways in which students balanced and blended student, worker, and mother roles and interpreted constructions of motherhood. Sears (2001) investigated the extent to which doctoral student mothers accepted the Hays (1996) concept of intensive mothering and ideas of the "good student." The good students being those who are responsible only for themselves, self-motivated, focused, and academically astute. The women rejected the ideologies of the good student and intensive mother and believed that they could create balance within their roles of mother and student, although each participant agreed that their child(ren) were their first priority. Lynch (2008) studied the "intersection between the structure of the American academic environment and women's blended identities as student mother" (p 585). She suggested that the high attrition rates of graduate student mothers were explained by the cultural idea that motherhood is a 'natural' goal for women (Douglass and Michaels, 2004; McMahon, 1995; Rich, 1977; Stearney, 1994 as cited in Lynch, 2008, p. 586),

similar to the ideology of motherhood that was rejected by participants in the Sears study. Lynch focused her study on the graduate student mother's perceptions of their status as student mothers and their academic environments and believed research focused on the ways that graduate student mothers combined their roles as mother and student could provide data regarding reasons for attrition of graduate programs and remedies to lower the rate. Tiu Wu (2013) and Demers (2014) studied how graduate student mothers combine their roles to learn strategies used to achieve balance and how motherhood impacted graduate school experience. Tiu Wu also investigated how the multiple roles affected the participant's notion of motherhood. Demers focused on how doctoral student mothers find balance of home and student responsibilities, challenges the participants face when returning to school, and how the addition of school to their responsibilities affects their self-care and health. Attrition was a concern for Tiu Wu (2013) as six participants temporarily left their professional role and five left their student role in order to handle challenges in other areas of their lives. The data, conclusions, and call for additional research of these four studies informed my research in many ways. Sears suggested additional research on graduate student mothers who withdrew from academic programs to learn what necessitated their withdrawal. This combined with Sears focus on intensive mothering made me think more critically about the ideology of motherhood and how mothers who work and attend school might be stymied by an ideology of motherhood they do not adhere to. Tiu Wu (2013) and Demers (2014) data and conclusions about work-life balance were pertinent, particularly time management, compartmentalization, and abandoning tedious and strict housekeeping standards, delegation of childcare responsibilities, and the importance of support of husbands, families and academic departments. It was from Lynch's study that the idea to focus my research on mothers with children under five years old was established. A participant in her study

commented and commended the public education system because once her child turned five, he was in school during the day, and the option for more affordable after school care was available.

Summary

The research studies discussed focused on student struggles with social and academic integration, narrative of constraint literature of the "good student," student perceptions of intensive mothering, and strategies for achieving work-life balance. They were important to informing this study because they outlined the challenges and theoretical frameworks used when analyzing the experiences of doctoral student mothers for the purposes of lowering attrition, improving graduation rates, and improving student satisfaction. Results and conclusions of these research studies demonstrated the need for a new, less negative, theoretical framework to be applied to the investigation of how doctoral student mothers manage and balance the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood. The framework needed to provide an explanation for women who find academic success and complete graduate school despite the challenges of work, school, and motherhood and explain "what it means to be an academic and mother."

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Narrative analysis was the methodological approach I chose to examine the lived experiences and perceptions of doctoral student mothers at a research one university and to investigate how these mothers balance the responsibilities of motherhood, school, and work. The questions below were used to focus the study:

How do doctoral student mothers manage and balance the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood?

1. What strategies do doctoral student mothers use to try to achieve a reasonable balance among their roles?

2. What conflicts do doctoral student mothers experience when managing their different roles?

3. What motivates women to persist in the doctoral program while simultaneously pursuing motherhood, work, and a doctoral degree?

4. What can an understanding of the experiences of mothers of young children who pursue school, work, and motherhood contribute to educational practice and policy?

Narrative inquiry is the "systematic study and interpretation of stories, life experiences, and the reporting of such research" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010, p. 373). Storytelling is essential to the narrative inquiry method (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The method targets experiences and personal history, the "life events" of those being studied, and the "narrator's meaning making" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.5). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), narrative methodology is appropriate for researchers who study those who are "socially marginalized or oppressed" and want to provide an opportunity for the studied population to "construct stories (narratives) about their lives" (p. 5). Although the population of women with children who pursue doctorates is increasing, I believe they are still a marginalized population, and they do not fit the mold of a traditional or expected graduate student.

Research Site

This study was conducted at Mid-Atlantic State University, an urban, comprehensive, land grant, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. There are three regional campuses as well as satellite locations in the state. This research project took place on the main campus that educates over 50,000 students, nearly 10,000 who are seeking graduate degrees. In addition to a traditional liberal arts and sciences curriculum, Mid-Atlantic State University also offers schools of medicine, law, engineering, pharmacy, business, and other disciplines. The student population is culturally and ethnically diverse, from all fifty states, and includes a growing population of international students. 60 percent of graduate students at Mid-Atlantic State University are women.

The Sample

Nine doctoral student mothers with young children were interviewed for this study. Snowball sampling was utilized, and participants were referred to the study by professors, college administrators, and other graduate students. The members of my sample were all around the same age, late twenties to thirties and the average age was 32 years-old. Eva and Kate were the youngest at 29 years-old and Kaitlyn was the oldest at 37 years-old. All participants were from the Humanities and Social Science departments, specifically Education, English, Political Science, and Sociology. My target population, mothers of children five years of age and younger who were recent or current students pursuing research doctorates, were selected to focus the participant research pool towards women with children who were too young to attend public school. Free compulsory education is generally available to children in kindergarten through senior year in high school; children roughly age five through 18. Children at five years-old generally have completed certain developmental milestones that require a lower level of care

than newborns and toddlers. The sampling method that I used, snowball sampling methodology, also called chain-referral sampling, is a form of convenience sampling that is effective when researching hidden, marginalized, or difficult to reach populations (Valdez & Kaplan, 1999). Motherhood status is not demographic information gathered by Mid-Atlantic State University about students, so I was unable to request names and contact information of graduate student mothers from the registrar's office. For purposes of this research, I considered a woman's status as a mother of a child under five-years-old to be hidden and for the group to be a hidden or difficult to reach population. Therefore, snowball sampling methodology was both a suitable and favorable sampling method for this research. Additionally, researching a hidden or difficult-to-reach population will yield a small group with the expectation that the sample size for the research would be low.

Nine women both met the requirements and were willing to participate in the study. Snowball sampling uses an

> individual (the "source", also referred to as the "seed") who has the desired characteristics and uses the person's social networks to recruit similar participants in a multistage process. After the initial source helps to recruit respondents, the respondents then recruit others themselves" (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010, p. 369).

According to Sadler et al. (2010), there are three advantages to using this sampling method: time, identifying appropriate research subjects, and trust. Reliant on social connections, snowball sampling often shortens the time needed to gather research subjects. Snowball sampling is useful in identifying appropriate research subjects who have complex eligibility requirements that they may want to keep private. Because mothers do not "fit the mold" of traditional graduate students, they often use many techniques to diminish their motherhood status. Close friends and family may be the only people able to identify them as graduate student mothers (Gardner, 2007). Lastly, this technique establishes trust between the researcher and participant

since they have a common acquaintance, increasing the likelihood of graduate student mothers being willing to participate (Sadler et al., 2010). I did not find this sampling method to be quick, although the search was limited to current or recent students at just one university. It took seven months to find nine eligible and willing participants for my study.

I assumed that graduate student mothers knew other graduate student mothers. Social media, specifically Facebook, was used to find participants. I asked my Facebook contacts to share information about my research study with their contacts to facilitate the snowball and to have possible research participants contact me through Facebook's direct message feature, by phone, or through email. I spoke with and emailed colleagues and friends who were professors, administrators, or graduate students at Mid-Atlantic State University across the disciplines about the research study and requested that they share with students, colleagues, and friends who were mothers of young children and pursuing research doctorates. Two faculty members, two colleagues, and two ineligible graduate students suggested participants for the study, although not all people suggested met the requirements for participation. Additionally, one participant suggested two fellow students for inclusion in the study. I contacted all suggested participants by email and asked them to complete a brief questionnaire (Appendix A) to confirm eligibility and willingness to participate.

It was a challenge to gather participants for the study. Anecdotally, when faculty colleagues and graduate students learned of my dissertation study, they often mentioned the large number of doctoral student mothers who were students in their classes or working in their labs and would speak with me about the challenges the students faced balancing their responsibilities. There were promises to tell students about my study and share my contact information if they were interested in becoming a research participant. Those conversations, though, did not yield

the participants I anticipated. Some women suggested for the research were unwilling to participate, and at least one denied having children. Lynch (2008) suggests that some graduate student mothers utilize the "don't ask, don't tell" approach, do not share their maternal status with faculty and fellow students, and purposely "maintain their 'maternal invisibility'" (p. 596). I respected the choice of the women who did not elect to participate, but I did wonder if they hid this part of their identity at the university.

Snowball sampling is not probability-based and may not yield a representative sampling of the studied population. The participants in my study were between 29 and 37 years old, heterosexual, married or partnered, from only four academic departments, and all but one in the late second stage or third stage of their doctoral journey.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Age	Department	Number of Children/ Ages	Status in Program (at time of interview)	Date(s) of Interview	Date(s) for check-in conversation
Kaitlyn	37	Education	3/8, 6, 3 years	Third Stage, Dissertation	November 24, 2014	March 1, 2015 and January 8, 2016
Victoria	32	Sociology	2/9 years, 9 months	Second Stage, Coursework completed, writing proposal/prospectus	February 25, 2015	July 1, 2015 and December 21, 2015
Amy	31	Political Science	3/10, 9, 4 years	Third Stage, Dissertation	February 26, 2015	none
Kate	29	Political Science	1/21 months	Second Stage, Coursework completed, writing proposal/prospectus	March 2, 2015	June 29, 2015 and December 17, 2015
Mary	34	English	1/18 months	Third Stage, Dissertation	March 3, 2015 and March 11, 2015	July 1, 2015 and December 23, 2015
Julia	32	English	1/23 months	Third Stage, Dissertation	April 6, 2015	December 16, 2015
Marian	32	English	1/3 years	Third Stage, Dissertation defended earlier that semester	April 10, 2015	July 1, 2015 and December 16, 2015
Eva	29	Education	1/18 months	First Stage, Coursework	May 1, 2015	June 30, 2015 and December 15, 2015
Drew	32	Education	1/2 years	Third Stage, Dissertation	June 28, 2015	December 23, 2015

Data Collection

Data consisted of a demographic questionnaire, a semi-structured interview based on an interview protocol (see Appendix C), check-in conversations, and documents available on university and faculty union websites about degree requirements and policies, maternity leave guidelines, policies about campus visitors, childcare facilities, and lactation spaces.

Demographic Questionnaire

Each potential research subject was asked to complete a brief questionnaire with demographic-type questions about the age(s) of her child(ren), doctoral student status, field of study, and willingness to participate in the research study (Appendix A). The questionnaire correspondence was conducted by email. The responses to the questions determined if the responder was eligible to be a participant in the research study.

In-depth Interviews

I gave the women voice and validity to their experiences by having them narrate their own stories, expressing their feelings in their own words, and constructing the meaning of their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Because these women shared personal stories, it was important to create an open and trusting relationship with the participants. I shared that I was a mother of three children, began conversations by asking each woman how she was and other pleasantries, I provided non-verbal actions of acceptance and understanding of their experiences by making eye contact and nodding, I offered tissues if the participants became emotional, provided verbal cues such as saying “yes” or “hmm,” asking participants if they needed a break, and using their words when rephrasing a question for a more in-depth answer. I was concerned about the power dynamic as the interviewer. I emphasized that I was conducting research in my

role as a graduate student, not as an administrator, and was mindful not to blur the lines of those roles.

I planned to gather participants in mid- to late-fall 2014 and conduct interview protocols (Appendix C) in late-fall 2014 or early-spring semester 2015 and speak with participants once per month during the spring 2015 semester. Suggested student participants did not snowball as quickly as I anticipated, and I needed to extend my timeline to gather participants. Additionally, as I started to gather students, I learned that they were at the prospectus/dissertation proposal or dissertation writing stage and/or completing a fellowship; and not having daily, weekly, or even monthly interactions with faculty, advisors, or fellow students. The participants shared that they may only visit campus once or twice during the semester and would prefer to speak less frequently.

Participants consented to one to three individual interviews to answer the interview protocol questions (Appendix C). I anticipated that the protocol questions could be answered in one 90-minute interview. Still, I asked participants to consent to one to three interviews in case a participant had a large number of stories to share or was particularly talkative. All participants, except for one, answered the protocol questions in one session, which lasted between 60 and 100 minutes. One participant, Mary, answered the protocol over two sessions, the first in-person in my work office, and the second over the phone. Combined, the two discussions lasted for two and a half hours long. Seven protocol interviews occurred in my work office at a date and time convenient to the participant. Marian requested that her interview occur in the café area of the student center on a weekday afternoon and Drew requested that her interview occur it the café of a bookstore on a weekend morning nearby to where she lived because she could not visit campus. The protocol interview consisted of semi-structured open-ended questions about

employment, decision to pursue a doctorate, goals related to receiving a doctorate, confluence of motherhood and graduate study, family and childcare, financial concerns, work-family balance, Mid-Atlantic State University as an institution, faculty and advisors, and motivation to complete a doctorate (Appendix C). Interviews were valuable as they focused on culture as experienced by the participants, the meanings the participants associate with situations, and the "nuances of the culture" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 112).

In order to schedule check-in conversations, I would email participants to arrange a time to speak on the phone. If participants did not respond to my email, I sent a second email to schedule the check-in conversation. If a check-in conversation was confirmed, I would text each participant a few minutes before the scheduled conversation to remind them of the appointment, ensure that the time was still convenient, and alert them of my phone number. I had one or two check-in conversations with eight of the nine participants. The check-in conversations were 10- and 40-minutes long. In total, between one and a quarter hours and three and a half hours of protocol interviews and check-in conversations occurred with each participant.

Participants were offered $50.00 for their participation in the research when the protocol interview and check-in conversations were completed. Although some of the participants initially wanted to be identified by their given name in the presentation of their stories, all research participants chose or were assigned a pseudonym in order to protect their identity.

Document Analysis

I reviewed available university and faculty union websites to learn more about degree requirements and policies, maternity leave guidelines, policies related to children on campus and in university buildings, childcare facilities, and lactation spaces. Documents were requested from the participants, and I anticipated the opportunity to review handbooks or written policies given

directly to students with the outline of their programs and any written institutional policies regarding program timelines, maternity leave, or leaves of absences of students altering status from full-time to part-time and vice versa. Additionally, participants were asked to share documents, emails, or other written correspondence that they deemed important to their story. Participants did not share written documentation of any type, although they discussed information they received about maternity leave policy and email correspondence with advisors or administrators about various situations.

Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1999) outlined six stages of data analysis: "(1) organizing the data; (2) generating categories; (3) coding the data; (4) testing the emergent understandings; (5) searching for alternative explanations; and (6) writing the report" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 152). A local, reputable transcriber was hired to transcribe each protocol interview and check-in conversation with each of the research subjects. I wrote myself a memo after each protocol interview that included a physical description of the participant, impressions of her energy and demeanor, aspects of her story that were striking, and questions I wanted to ask during the next conversation. I also wrote similar memos after each check-in conversation. I began to think about the data by reading and rereading the transcripts, listening to the recordings, and noting hesitations or laughter of the participant. I initially organized data for each participant into the categories of the interview protocol: motherhood; family and childcare; financial concerns; work-family balance; institutional issues; faculty and advisors; impact of motherhood on academics and career; and motivation. Not all protocol questions were asked in the order outlined in the interview protocol sheet (Appendix C). Additional review of the data revealed prevalent themes and the need to redefine codes. For example, questions about mothering and

impact of motherhood on academics and career yielded responses about motivation. I then coded according to five codes: motivation; family; finances; advisors, faculty, and administration; and university policy and resources.

The first draft of the narrative told the story of each participant's motivation. Every participant articulated reasons for entering a doctoral program, combining their educational pursuit with motherhood, and stated their motivation to complete their degree, which showed a linear progression. I sorted the data from each participant according to those three areas and created a document with that information for each participant. First, I wrote a narrative of each participant's motivation and told their stories with these three elements. Many of the participants relayed that their motivation had changed after having a child, and I realized that their changing motivation, at times, was related to seeking balance and managing conflicts in their roles and responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood. I defined seeking balance as the approach to give each life responsibility a level of prioritization and importance; each participant selected her own priorities. I defined managing conflict as the means of handling disagreement that challenged the balance of participant's responsibilities, finances, cultural expectations or whatever their specific challenges might be. I reviewed my annotated transcripts and used post-it notes to flag where participants spoke of balance and conflict for each of the categories of the interview: motherhood, family and childcare, financial concerns, work-family balance, institutional issues, faculty and advisors and impact of motherhood on academics and career. I returned to the document created about motivation, added balance and conflict as categories for each participant, and pasted the flagged material. Participants discussed certain aspects of their stories multiple times, and I combined those stories to create a bigger picture of the information the participants were relaying. I then read all of the interview data comprising the balance

category separate from the data for the conflict category. New cross-case similarities began to emerge and new codes were created for the similarities: seeking balance through time management and compartmentalization, delegation of childcare and home responsibilities, and accepting mentoring and support; and managing conflicts due to financial constraints and health insurance, differences in cultural expectations, and structural lag. Balance and conflict were written as vignettes, like chapters of a book, and set in the middle of the story of motivation to show how motivation changed from the beginning of the participant's doctoral journey to where they were when the data collection period ended.

Validity

Validity adds to the quality of a research study. Member checking, triangulation, and disconfirming evidence are methods of creating validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 124 - 129). With member checking, the lens of the participant is established. I shared interview transcripts with the participants to ensure that the depiction of their experience or statements was correct.

Reciprocity also adds to the quality of the research. Research is supposed to be beneficial to both the researcher and the research participant. I appreciated the time, effort, and generosity of the participants to speak with me over the course of a calendar year. The participants were appreciative of the research topic and giving validity to their experiences as graduate student mothers.

Triangulation is the “convergence among multiple sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Transcripts from the interview protocols and check-in conversations and available public information from the university and faculty union websites were used for the triangulation of data.

Chapter Four provides narratives of the nine participants that tell the story of students choosing to combine the experiences of motherhood and doctoral study, balance, conflicts, and motivation.

CHAPTER IV: NINE NARRATIVES OF DOCTORAL STUDENT MOTHERS

In the nine narratives that follow, the doctoral student mothers in my sample explain their motivations for pursuing a doctorate, overlapping motherhood and doctoral study, motivation to persist, and reflect on the way they balance perceived conflicts within their responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood. Across the unique and diverse backgrounds, circumstances and experiences of these doctoral student mothers, some common themes emerged including the positive effects of mentoring and emotional support, importance of time management and compartmentalization, and motivation to complete the doctorate not only to accomplish one's own personal and professional goals but for the benefit of one's children and family life.

The members of my sample relied heavily on their partners for support. Five participants, Kaitlyn, Amy, Kate, Mary, and Marian spoke at great length about shared household and childcare responsibilities with their partners, though Victoria, Julia, and Drew also discussed the support of their spouses. Kate, for example, worked on her dissertation on weekends when her partner could watch their son and her partner also managed to rearrange his work schedule so that he could watch their child during the workweek. Similarly, Kaitlyn's husband routinely handled the evening responsibilities of dinner, baths and homework for their three children. Eva's lack of support from her spouse stands out and is, perhaps, standard in their culture. Seven participants regarded their family and child(ren) as their number one priority. It is important to note that of the two participants who did not chose family and child(ren) as their first priority, one said that she planned to dedicate the year to completing her doctorate and concerns with her son caused her to not make the progress she anticipated towards completing her doctorate because she needed to dedicate more time to the needs of her son and the other said

she worked towards each priority every day, but her son became the focus of each day at 4:00 p.m.

Student mothers spoke of various sources of motivation. One motivation was to set an example to their children of what women could accomplish. Kaitlyn, for example, was motivated by the desire to show her three sons that women could have doctorates too, while Victoria wanted to be a role model for her step-daughter. Expanded job opportunities and financial security that would accompany stable, full-time employment was another motivation. Many women discussed careers on the tenure-track and as research professors and advancing in higher education administration for the financial and health benefits that would accompany employment. Financial concerns were expected for the group as household income must stretch to support a larger family.

Here I present the narratives in the order that I conducted the interviews.

Kaitlyn's Story

> I hope this doesn't sound bad, but when I first became a mom, when [my son] was born, I decided I needed to do something that was about me and wasn't about my relationship with my husband….And that it wasn't about the baby. So, I decided to start taking classes. I took them without applying to the program so that I could feel it out and get to know some faculty. So really, it was about me and doing something that was just about me.

Kaitlyn was the first research subject to agree to participate in the study. We first met in November 2014. She was 37 years old and the married mother of three children, ages three, six, and eight-years-old, and had started taking doctoral classes after the birth of her oldest child. She was pursuing an Ed.D. She was employed as a full-time administrator at a local university and was transitioning from a Director position to a Dean position. Kaitlyn was in her 13th semester of doctoral work and was finalizing her dissertation for defense in the following semester.

Kaitlyn shared that when prioritizing the different areas of her life, kids and family came first.

> They are the most important thing, so I put more time with what they are doing, the family things on the weekend… It's really a struggle for me to look away and realize that they're doing new things that I didn't know they could do. Or my three-year-old's non-stop talking about subjects that I didn't even know he'd been introduced to. And how heartbreaking it is that I wasn't the one who got to introduce those topics to him.

Kaitlyn's job was her second priority. "Love" was the word she used to describe her feelings about her job, what she did, and who she worked with. And, of course, it paid the bills. The doctorate lagged behind work. "It's the last thing on my plate and the thing that kind of falls off at times." Katelyn lamented that because of staffing issues at work, she stepped away from her dissertation for six weeks. The time away from the research caused additional stress. "If you're not playing with it, and touching it, and tweaking it every day, you really can forget some of the nuances of the things that you found and pulled out and were thinking about."

Seeking Balance

Kaitlyn's husband had earned a doctorate before they had children. She provided financial support while he was a student and shared that he felt it was his responsibility to provide emotional support while she completed her degree.

> My husband has been a huge support and encouragement with that. When I first started at [place of employment], he was finishing up his doctorate, and I was kind of financially supporting as at that point while he finished up. And so, he felt like it was his turn to kind of take on more, and little did he know he was taking on a lot more because we had kids at that time to support the family. So, I would say a lot of encouragement.

Kaitlyn's time-consuming work and academic schedule required that her husband assume responsibility for many home and childcare responsibilities, including preparing and serving dinner, giving baths to the children, and ensuring homework was completed. She said

> It forced my husband to do different roles within the family. So, it's not just mom doing the typical mom types of things at home. So, I'm not the one who makes dinner; my

> husband makes dinner. That's more of a job attribute for our family than it is a doctoral attribute, but at one time, when I was taking classes in the evening, it was Daddy watching the kids, and it wasn't Mommy, it was Dad getting dinner ready. It was Dad giving the baths, so it gave a different feel as to what happened at home.

Kaitlyn went on to liken their hectic schedule to a winning situation for herself because she is busy writing and not sharing the responsibility for the evening home and childcare responsibilities. She said,

> He [husband] gets exhausted, and I know there are moments when he is sitting there thinking why am I making dinner again….He has admitted that it feels like I'm in the winning situation because I'm off at the library writing and he's not in the winning situation because he's got three kids wrestling each other, and he's got to get them into the bath, and he's got to battle them to do some homework, and he's doing it.

Finding time to write when she also had the energy and concentration to focus was a challenge for Kaitlyn. Kaitlyn shared that she received a lot of phone calls in the middle of the night from work about student emergencies. On workdays, she would wake early to drop the kids at school and then fight traffic to commute to the university where she worked. Her introverted nature took a back-seat while she spent the day being extroverted at work, managing a major component of Student Affairs. Unless she had an evening work event she needed to attend, she would rush home where she had to be "extroverted again" while they ate dinner as a family and managed baths and showers, homework, and playtime. It is not a surprise that Kaitlyn was occasionally a "cranky Mom" and at 9:00 p.m., was too emotionally and physically exhausted to write and needed to go to bed. Kaitlyn started waking up at 5:00 a.m. on Saturday mornings to write for a few hours before her children were awake, and their activities would begin.

Kaitlyn said that she never felt guilty that her husband had taken responsibility for much of the home and childcare responsibilities. She was wistful that she did not have a daughter to show that "mommies can have doctorates too," but she felt that she was providing a positive gender-balanced home environment for her three sons. She thought they were learning at a

young age that women can have the same education as men, and there did not have to be strict, separate roles for men and women at home. "I'm giving that education to my sons. It's not only Dad that has his doctorate. Mommy is working on hers and that everybody can. It's not just a gendered thing."

Kaitlyn's pursuit of a doctorate was inspired by a work colleague who was pursuing a doctorate while working full-time and raising two sons. This colleague provided support throughout Kaitlyn's doctoral journey by reading drafts and providing feedback that helped shape Kaitlyn's dissertation. Kaitlyn said this colleague was her role model, "I always looked up to her just for the way she carried herself professionally, her ability to do it all…[how] she cared about all the people around her…. She genuinely cared about students." Kaitlyn went on to say that she really appreciated how this colleague managed all of her responsibilities. Before Kaitlyn was a mother and started her doctoral work, she was not aware of how challenging it all could be. "I've had some really good conversations about the reality of that and how it is uber challenging and the emotional struggles of feeling pulled in a million directions and not feeling like you're doing anything really well."

Kaitlyn spoke of a professor who provided support after she gave birth to her second son. Kaitlyn's son was born during the middle of the semester, and the professor provided supportive conversations, was flexible about class attendance, and allowed Kaitlyn to bring her son to class.

> I actually had a faculty member, [professor's name] who is very supportive in conversations. When I had my second son during the middle of the semester, and had some classes I wanted to take with her…she gave me extra time off but then she encouraged me to bring him in for the remainder of the semester, so we had a seventh member attending class…

Managing Conflicts

Kaitlyn felt conflicted by the use of their family income for tuition when she had to acquire loans to cover the expense because of their childcare expenses.

> I had two semesters of full-time work that I had to do here [Mid-Atlantic State University] and those two semesters were really hard on everybody because we had three in daycare at one time and daycare in [Mid-Atlantic State] is terribly expensive and having to pay for the full-time semesters, so we ended up taking out loans to be able to manage…

She felt resentful of the tuition cost, loans, and long-term burden the money would have on her family. "…it started to make me really resent the doctorate program and what I had gotten myself into because…I was adding burden to my family long-term, so that was stressful." During the last year of dissertation work, Kaitlyn was only taking one credit each semester. Yet, she was concerned about needing to purchase a new family car that would accommodate three children and provide transportation to Mid-Atlantic State University and work. She was looking forward to utilizing the funds she was applying to tuition to the car purchase. In the end, though, Kaitlyn recognized that she might be in a better financial position than others. "I feel it [financial strain] a little bit, but it's not as bad as I'm sure other people have."

Although Kaitlyn was influenced by seeing her mother's struggles as a single parent who did not have a college education and worked "hourly, tough jobs," Kaitlyn was also conflicted because she was unable to provide her children with the time and attention her mother provided to her when she was a child. About her mother's influence, Kaitlyn says, "the biggest influence of why I do what I do and how I've built my family really stems from what my mom has done." In comparing herself to her mom, Kaitlyn remembered that her mom always attended her academic and athletic events, yet Kaitlyn herself struggled to be present in the same way. She commented,

> I'm failing because I'm not providing my family with the same type of love and support and always being there the way she was. So, it's a struggle because it definitely has influenced what I do and why I do what I do, but especially right now, I feel like I'm done with this part of my life [graduate school]. I feel like I'm not living up to what she had built and the amount of time she gave to us.

Keeping Motivated

Although Kaitlyn's original motivation to pursue a doctorate was to do something for herself, as her children became older and more involved in activities that required her time, she enjoyed watching them grow and pursue their interests, which caused her motivation to shift. She said,

> I want to be fully engaged, so at this point, my motivation has turned from this is really fun, and I wanted to do this for me because it's wonderful to I just want to get this done… You know I want my time back. I want the degree. I want the respect that comes with the degree… I want my family to be proud of me and to realize that they can accomplish this too. And I want to go back to really being able to focus on my job.

The knowledge and ability to talk about higher education trends and student needs, creating new knowledge that can better inform educational practice, as well as future career possibilities, were both goals and motivation to achieving a doctorate. Kaitlyn commented,

> I just believe as I move up in higher education, having a doctorate will aid me in so many ways with being able to talk about assessment and how assessment informs practice, just the prestige of having the doctorate opens more doors for jobs that you can apply for and will be considered for. In addition, the current research that I'm doing, I love it. I love the idea of providing something back to higher education that will help other students experience through their four years of undergrad.

By March 2015, Kaitlyn had successfully defended her dissertation and prepared to make final corrections and complete the paperwork to graduate at the end of the semester. Kaitlyn said that she felt different, relaxed, after defending her dissertation. She said, "Honestly, I walked out of that room that day and felt different. Not like, "Oh, I'm a Doctor now." No, I felt like I didn't have the stress of me anymore."

Kaitlyn completed her doctorate in May 2015.

Victoria's Story

> I had read some of the research coming out of sociology or a discipline who thinks about these topics occasionally….So the data showed there was really no good time to have a child.
>
> I started talking with my peers. Yeah, it's true—peers and faculty mentors about motherhood. I had a lot of female mentors.
>
> And so, some of the graduate students were saying, 'Oh have a child in graduate school when you're writing your dissertation.' A lot of what I've heard is like 'When you're in the process of writing the dissertation, that's a good time to have a child.' Right?
>
> And so time went on, and I sort of took this slow route through my Ph.D., and then I entered my 30s, and my partner at the time changed, and he was very much of the mindset that he wanted to have kids earlier than I was ready. I kept saying to him, 'No, I need to be ABD before I take that plunge.' I'm actually still not ABD.
>
> But eventually, what ultimately happened is my father passed away, and that changed my whole life perspective. And when he [Victoria's father] was sick, I felt like, at that time, it was really important that I wanted him to have a grandchild. I'm in my 30s now. My partner wants it. So, it's as I think many women's choices to go into motherhood it's this complex combination of factors.
>
> And ultimately, you're never ready, right? I hear that all the time. And I truly wouldn't have said I was ready, but I felt like it's now or never. I guess not ever, but I think that I'm probably going to do this whether or not I'm where I want to be with my degree.

I met Victoria in February 2015. She was pursuing a doctorate in Sociology. Victoria was 32 years old, married, and birth mother of a nine-month-old son and stepmother to a nine-year-old girl who lived with her birth mother during school months and with Victoria and her family during holidays and the summer. Victoria was in her ninth year of doctoral study and had not yet defended her dissertation proposal.

Victoria's priority was home life "I've always put that first." She reflected,

> Mental barriers make it easier to prioritize the things that I have less mental barriers about. Home stuff - you have no choice but to deal with. Some demands happen on a daily basis. You can't take control of your children, right? They have needs. So that's easy to prioritize. Teaching. You're held accountable…. But once again, this lack. I'm motivated to do these things in my life but not motivated to do the dissertation.

Seeking Balance

Victoria realized that she focused on the activities she enjoyed, and they utilized most of the hours in a day, leaving little time left for necessary activities that were not as enjoyable. "Hedonistic" was the term she used to describe how she allotted her time. She enjoyed her home life and teaching, focusing her time on those activities and then did not spend the time needed on her dissertation. She reflects

> I found it very difficult to focus on my dissertation while raising an infant. Like I really want to spend all my time with him [her son]. And my research isn't rewarding in the short-term. But seeing him [her son] smile…I'm all for immediate gratification.

Victoria said that her husband was supportive of her doctoral pursuit, although his own educational path was very different. She said, "He loves the idea of me having a Ph.D….but since he doesn't really know what it entails. He just assumes that I will get it done." At the time of our first conversation, February 2015, he was injured and unemployed, so he's responsible for much of the childcare. She said he was a "very involved father" and "really doing more of the daytime child-rearing than I'm able to do." She did mention that there was "some negotiation about housework things" but did not elaborate upon that statement.

Victoria shared that her extended family, particularly her mother and mother-in-law, were very supportive of her pursuit of a doctorate. Victoria's mother provided childcare, which allowed her to work and be a student without the expense of daycare tuition. When Victoria mentioned to her mother-in-law, she said "I should set aside at least an hour a day to work on my project." When they would chat, her mother-in-law would ask, "how many hours have your worked in it this week?" That simple addition to conversations helped her be accountable.

As supportive as her family members were, Victoria clarified that it was in a "you can do it sort of way" and "tell me what you need," but because her husband was a plumber and had not

attended college, she had to be more clear about the help that she required. She said that it took a while, but she had a conversation about what she really needed. "No, I really can't be bothered when I'm trying to work on this. And I actually need a lot of hours of the day to work on this project because there are a lot of like interruptions." In the end, she said she "probably knows what to do. Come to campus more and be away [from home] where I have more clean delineation of work and home instead of blurring the two boundaries."

Victoria said her dissertation advisor provided a lot of support in acceptance, baby items, and assistance with creating a plan to complete a dissertation when Victoria had the added responsibilities of a child. Victoria appreciated that she and her advisor could speak openly about motherhood; they had met each other's children. Although Victoria was initially "afraid" about announcing her pregnancy, her advisor said, "I never wanted you to feel that way."

Victoria said her advisor gave her advice to create a plan in advance of her son's birth, so she had a workable schedule to work towards completing her dissertation and also have the time she needed her with family. Victoria shared, "she's like, you need a blueprint….you're going to have maybe an hour to work at a time. So, you need to break whatever you're working on right now into manageable chunks….Before you have the kid, you put the plan in place." Victoria gave the impression that she had not put the suggested plan in place.

Managing Conflict

Victoria enjoyed teaching and often worked on various research projects at the university, but the financial pressure of her husband being temporarily unemployed, combined with no longer receiving a TA or fellow position, made work a necessity. Additionally, she needed to find healthcare as she no longer received it through university employment. She said she had "700 part-time jobs" and felt "financial pressure to be working full-time to support the

household." She was very concerned that although full-time employment would solve their financial concerns, the time commitment combined with a lack of motivation would cause her not to complete her doctorate.

Victoria had managed to have eight years of graduate assistant, teaching assistant, or fellowship positions that provided some health care package. Because she had switched to part-time student status, health insurance was no longer provided, and she was responsible for purchasing it privately. Victoria discussed the need for family leave and financial support for graduate school mother after giving birth. She said, "I wasn't able to apply for family leave because as part-time, you know, it's that hybrid student-staff role that many graduate students must be in….And that would have been really hugely helpful to have that financial support through that period." She went onto say, "I was in the process of how am I going to put food on the table…maybe I could have focused some of my energies; in fact, I surely could have gotten my dissertation done a bit more quickly had I focused and did not have to worry about the financial concerns."

Victoria shared that when she explained the need to pump to her department, they provided her with her own office, allowing her the necessary privacy. She discussed that if you are sharing an office with three other people, it's not a really comfortable situation to be exposed that way. Also, she thought that the rooms should have a couch and not "seem totally institutionalized." In 2015, she did not know of any lactation rooms at Mid-Atlantic State University.

Keeping Motivated

As an undergraduate student, Victoria participated in a program that encouraged students to conduct research and pursue a doctorate after graduation. She said the program "put the seed

in my brain about how pursuing a doctorate would be a great idea." She also said she had a lot of misconceptions about college professors and thought that it would be a career with "a lot of downtime." Also, her partner at the time was pursuing a doctorate, and she liked the idea of them having a shared experience. Victoria applied to Mid-Atlantic State University as well as other universities in the Mid-Atlantic State University geographical area. She shared that her way of choosing a university and academic program was 'backward' and she freely shares that with students when they ask about her career and educational path. Although she enjoyed teaching and research, she would prefer to teach at a small liberal arts college (SLAC), where teaching is the primary focus of a faculty job. She said that her current goal was to be a higher education administrator, particularly a chief diversity officer.

When we spoke in July 2015, she was hoping to defend her proposal that month and take an academic leave of absence during which she would collect and analyze data and write her dissertation. We had a check-in conversation in December 2015, and she had registered for one credit during the fall 2015 semester and would be taking an academic leave for the next two semesters. She planned to enroll the following spring again to defend her dissertation and graduate in May 2017.

When asked about motivation, Victoria shared that she was motivated to persist due to the length of time that she had invested in pursuing a doctorate, and leaving after nine years of coursework would make her "feel like a failure." She also "liked the idea of being a doctor whether or not I'm a professor….I kind of want the accolade. I want the title." Being a role model was also important to Victoria. She said, "it would be nice to be able to show my stepdaughter that you can be both successful in your career and with a family."

Victoria completed her doctorate in January 2018.

Amy's Story

> The four-year-old was the accident part…. I knew I was going to do my masters, and it was going to lead into a Ph.D. of some sort. Whether it was here or Princeton or somewhere else that was in this area. I didn't see this as incompatible, to be honest with you. I saw it as they [children] are going to be in school, and I'm going to be in school, and it was kind of a fun thing like oh mom's going to school, too. And they have only known me to be in school.

I met Amy in February 2015. Amy was 31-year-old, a doctoral candidate in Political Science, married, and the mother of two adopted children ages ten and nine and a four-year-old biological son. She was in her eighth semester of study and hoping to complete her dissertation later that spring or summer.

Amy shared that her priorities "depend on the year." She planned that in the 2014-2015 academic year, the fourth year of her doctoral program, she would prioritize completing her dissertation. She was stressed and frustrated that the time and discussed that the energy she had planned to dedicate to completing her dissertation instead had been focused on her older son. He was having behavioral problems at school and seeking a lot of attention at home. Amy recognized that her son was struggling with the changes that would occur when she completed her doctorate, and he was anxious that a new job for Amy would require them to move, find a new home, and attend a new school.

Seeking Balance

Amy was cautious when speaking about her children at work. She would talk about them, but not "go on and on." "I find that there is a gender tension about that but I don't really want to illuminate that." Amy also did not want to use having children as a crutch and be known as someone who says, "I will get my paper to you next week just because my youngest stayed up, and I'm so tired." Although Amy was cautious when speaking about her family, she made sure her on-campus supervisor knew she needed to leave at 5:00 p.m. so she could go home and

make dinner. Amy scheduled her day and woke up early, dropped her kids at school, ate dinner as a family at 6:00 p.m., took her son to a weekly therapy appointment, did her own homework when her children did their homework, set aside 30 minutes when they played video games, used Friday's to write in the morning and then run errands and spend time with her husband before watching a movie as a family at night. Saturday mornings were for free play at the park or jumping on a trampoline for her youngest, and Saturday afternoons were for playdates. Every minute of the day was accounted for and used to accomplish a goal, even if that goal was family bonding.

Amy felt supported by her husband but not her extended family. "You have my full backing" was how her husband supported her doctorate, decision to have a child or future children, and where they might live so she could be hired as a professor. She said her husband decided to be a stay-at-home-dad and worked from home in the evening hours doing product testing and customer support. She shared that because of his willingness to care for the children, share in the meal preparation and house chores, "I don't have as much stress as other couples I've talked to who [say] my husband doesn't do any of the housecleaning. My husband doesn't do any of the childcare." She said she made most of the decisions for their family, and her husband and children would follow her job.

Amy had a difficult pregnancy and needed to be on bed rest. She said, missed two months of school and work, and her professors were "incredibly supportive" and flexible with messages like "just email me your papers whenever you are done." Amy found bed rest to be boring, and her determination to make progress in her doctoral program allowed her to focus on completing her papers and coursework before her son was born.

Amy shared that her dissertation advisor showed support of her scholarship and career by recommending her for a teaching award, offering her opportunities to co-publish with him, sending her job opportunities with the promise of a recommendation, and ensured she received enough funding through department grants and an advance from his research account that she repaid through work the following semester to travel to the Middle East and conduct research abroad.

Managing Conflict

Amy had a four-year package to fund her during the doctorate, but as the main support of a family of five, she spoke about financial concerns. "I basically tried to do everything I can...food stamps or extra aid of any kind, social security income for our youngest son….I work, like I said, for the department, and research assistant….like three jobs in order to sustain us." Additionally, she was not raised in this part of the country, and the rent was much higher than she was accustomed to. "We rented a house for $400.00 in the south, and it was an entire house with a huge yard. So, it's a huge difference when you come up here; it's multiplied time four for living." Amy had a lot of stress related to finances and said, "We are very stringent, we just are. I just don't buy a lot of extra stuff. I buy three things over and over again, and it's always books, food, and movies."

Amy's challenges with her parents started after college, and she said their lack of support motivated her to accomplish her dreams. After completing her bachelor's degree, Amy had been awarded a Fulbright award. Her parents did not want her to travel to or study anything about the Middle East because of terrorism. She had to create a new bank account that only she controlled to accept her Fulbright funds; her parents had tried to freeze her childhood bank account. Later they did not want her to study Women and Gender Studies because she might become a "bra-

burning, lesbian, liberal." Amy's parents would be satisfied if she married a doctor, and she was a doctor too, "but a medical doctor that has a pediatrician practice…from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m." Amy was proud of her accomplishments and likened it to being a "teenager inside, rebellion….but for positive things."

Keeping Motivated

Amy decided to enroll in a doctoral program while completing a master's degree. A professor suggested that she belonged in Political Science and wrote a personal recommendation letter to the department. Amy also notes that her children always knew her to be a graduate student. She relayed that her career goal was to obtain a faculty position, either at a small liberal arts college or a research university.

Amy was determined, unapologetically determined, to complete the dissertation, find a tenure-track faculty position, and advocate for herself and her children. For example, her youngest son was diagnosed with autism, and she advocated for him to get the preschool and therapy services that he needed. She said, "I got him into everything pretty much. That wouldn't have happened without me being the way I am. Just calling all the time….I was going to do anything for him to be honest with you." And Amy was determined to complete her degree and publish in her field too. She said, "I have the same stubborn motivation when it comes to finishing an article or a chapter. I need to just sit down and just finish this; it just needs to be done….And I'm just going to do what I need to do to be where I want to be, so I have a five-year plan which most people laugh at." Amy went on to share that she reads the CVs of faculty she admires and admitted she uses them to learn new revenues for funding, conferences to attend and present research, and to figure out the paths.

After giving birth to her youngest son, Amy shared that her motivation had changed.

> I want to become someone that they [her family] can rely on, they can depend on, and that they see as a success. And that motivates me. For instance, that definitely motivates me to be who I think they want me to be.

Amy believed her family wanted her to be a professor who publishes work that is relevant and beneficial.

Amy completed her doctorate in 2015.

Kate's Story

> Well, I actually did not decide that [to become pregnant]. So, it was not on purpose….I thought about it and just decided well, you know, I was twenty-seven when I got pregnant; twenty-eight when I had my son. And my partner was very supportive, so we decided let's go for it. We will make it work.

Kate decided to pursue a doctoral degree in Political Science after working as a researcher at a woman's foundation. At the time of the protocol interview, Kate was 29 years old, and her son was 21 months old. She was in the 10th semester of doctoral study and at the end of her five-year fellowship. She planned to search for both academic and non-academic jobs after graduation.

Although Kate described herself as a "career-oriented person," her son was her first priority. Completing her dissertation came second, which she described as "getting out of here, just finishing."

Seeking Balance

Kate worked in New York before enrolling in a doctoral program, and she was accustomed to working "long, hard hours." When working in New York, her workday was often 12 hours. She reflected that it would be "pretty tough" to maintain that schedule now that she was a mother. Kate appreciated the flexible schedule of an academic and felt that she could balance work and motherhood better if she had an academic job after completing her doctorate.

Kate's week was structured so she could teach, write her dissertation, and care for her son. Her son was in childcare three days a week, and those days were focused on teaching and writing. The two days each week he did not attend childcare were the days that Kate "focus[ed] on being with him" and would "try and get done any other stuff like laundry, you know, making sure my house doesn't look like a bomb went off." She took advantage of her son's naptime on those days to grade papers.

Kate relied on her partner to watch their son on the weekend so she could dedicate time to working on her dissertation. For Kate, the weekend writing hours were a necessity and summed it up, "I'm never going to finish this…because I just don't have enough time during the week."

During the first year after their son was born, Kate's partner was able to arrange his schedule to work from home some days. Also, a fellow student volunteered to watch Kate's son, so when there was a gap in childcare, Kate brought her son to campus, and the student babysat. In the spring semester, Kate's academic interests matched two online courses offered by her academic department, and she was able to fulfill her TA requirement by those two courses. Between her partner's flexible work schedule, a fellow student who was willing to babysit, and the undergraduate director who allowed her to teach online, Kate was able to fulfill her TA requirement without being burdened by the cost of daycare during the first academic year after her son's birth.

Although Kate did not have a mentor with whom she discussed motherhood, there was a professor at another school who she could speak with and seek advice about her career path, work ethic, and the politics in academic. She said that this woman was supportive in helping her

determine whether or not she wanted to be an academician and had also suggested colleges and universities where Kate might like to work.

Managing Conflict

Financial constraints and health insurance were major concerns for Kate. A significant portion of the protocol interview and check-in conversations centered on these concerns, specifically health insurance for her son and her ability to pay for the childcare needed so she could teach and have time to complete her dissertation. Kate's partner paid their living expenses, but she was responsible for childcare costs. Kate shared that she experienced some anxiety since her fellowship would end after the next academic year. Her anxiety was relieved a bit that her partner was willing to cover their son on his insurance when the time came, but she was concerned about covering childcare and life expenses when she was paid $5,000.00 per class. Still, she worried about the possibility of her partner losing his job, the ability to pay their living expenses, losing future insurance for their son, and not being able to rely on her extended family for financial assistance.

Kate did not take maternity leave when she had her son. "Taking the leave, actually, I found out to be quite frowned upon. And this is where I think there are some issues with women in the department still believing that they won't be supported." Kate and another pregnant student in the department met with the department chair. Kate described the meeting,

> it was like, well, [department chair speaking] you [Kate and other student] both have set TA lines, so if both of you are out we have to pay your lines and pay two separate TA's, and we have a tenured faculty member on leave… And, you know…after the conversation, you got the point, like we are not going to like you if you take this leave like we won't appreciate it. And that was never said, but you know, it's like you would be screwing the department was the implication.

The other student did not take maternity leave. She had family in the area, and they were willing to provide childcare, Kate's extended family did not live in the area and were unable to provide childcare because they were working too. In the end, Kate did not take maternity leave. She gave birth to her son a few days before spring semester final exams. She graded the papers for her class and submitted grades just a few days after giving birth. A few months later, in September, she started another year as a TA.

Keeping Motivated

Kate gave birth to her son at the end of her third year of doctoral study and did not reveal her pregnancy "until it was apparent." She said that she had "anecdotal evidence that not all advisors will respond favorably [to a pregnant student], and they will think that you won't have the time to really focus on the dissertation."

Kate's progress towards dissertation completion was delayed because a person in her department wrote a conference paper that would be published and used similar data to the dataset she planned to use for her dissertation. She said that she had to change the focus and "do some additional work…and move away from the creation of the original dataset as one of the main contributions." She described this as "disheartening" but was also "optimistic" that it would not delay her degree completion. She hoped to graduate the following May. When we spoke again in December 2015, she hoped to defend over the summer.

When asked about motivation, Kate responded that she was encouraged to persist because of her eagerness to finish, get a job, have health insurance, and make a living wage. She said,

> The desire is to get out of here. Honestly, it's really what's motivating me….I do care about the topic. But you know, making some grand discovery is not what's motivating me at all…I need a job where I have health insurance. And where I'm not making below the poverty level.

Kate completed her doctorate in October 2019.

Mary's Story

> A couple of women I knew became pregnant and went on maternity leave and got maternity leave as TA's and I found out there was a policy. I had been scared to ask if there was a policy. And so that was a little more…that made me feel a little less like I would be committing some monstrous act by getting pregnant. So I ended up getting pregnant while I was working on the first chapter of my dissertation in the fall of 2012, and yeah, so it was like I was ready... I decided okay, I know that I want to have children and if I wait until a tenure track job to have children, that may never happen. I may have a lot more trouble conceiving… I had a friend who said something like 'You know there's never a good time. There's never going to be a great time when you have a lot…all the money that you would ever need, and all your ducks in a row so you might as well do it when you feel ready to do it.'

I met Mary in March 2015. Mary was 34 years old, married, and had an 18-month old daughter. Prior to beginning her doctorate, Mary had worked in children's book publishing and completed an MFA. Her motivation to pursue a doctorate in English was to get a tenure-track teaching position at a university. Although Mary knew there was a maternity leave policy for graduate students, she did not take advantage of it. Her daughter was born one month before Mary started a fellowship. Mary used the fellowship year to be home, care for her daughter, and work on her dissertation.

Mary was emphatic that her daughter was her first priority, but she also questioned if that might be gendered; that women are conditioned to put their children first, and men are conditioned to put their jobs as their first priority.

> My kid is the number one big picture, like definitely. And I think it's interesting because I think like I think you [women] do kind of get the message that your kid shouldn't be number one is this weird way even though I think nobody would say I put my job before my kid right like nobody would say that to someone. I mean maybe, some men would say that I don't know…you know like maybe because you're sort of taught to do that as a man.

Seeking Balance

Mary said that her husband was supportive and hands-on with their daughter and really took control of their daughter's care after her birth.

> He was so supportive when she was first born he was just such a great co-parent because he had read all this stuff what fathers can do when the baby is born, and he basically decided your [Mary's] job is going to be to feed the baby and my job is going to be to do everything else, and he really did everything else and he just like cleaned the house, and did all the diapers, and did everything.

Mary appreciated how much labor he had taken on and started to feel that maybe she should not ask him to do more. But when there were deadlines, and she needed time to write to complete assignments, she learned to tell him that she was going to take Saturday to write, and he was going to have the baby all day. Generally, Mary wrote in shorter spurts, two hours at a time, so her husband was accustomed to those shorter childcare commitments. When deadlines required longer commitments, she reflected, "I think it was kind of a shock to him like how exhausting it is to take care of a toddler for six, or eight, or ten hours." To ensure she could write uninterrupted, she says, "I just realized I had to be really explicit and say like I have this deadline I need to get this done, you have to pretend I'm not here. And once I explained that to him, he was good." Mary reflected on the difference between being supportive to a partner with an academic career than being a partner who is a good father, "you have to be okay with the fact that there are going to be these periods of intense withdrawal or whatever where you need to pick up the slack."

Mary wished she had a role model to provide an example of a successful, accomplished professor and mother. She said that when she was an adolescent, her friend's mother earned a doctorate. As a girl, she thought this woman had a great job after her doctorate, but now as a doctoral student and mother, Mary thought that perhaps the woman's choices were more limited. Mary reflected,

> We watched her finish her dissertation and then, you know, she got a good job working in a tutoring center at [college], and I think it was a good job and fulfilling for her. But I think she felt frustrated that she couldn't get a faculty position or that sort of seemed closed to her because she took too long for the senior dissertation and then had this wonderful child. I feel like that's sort of a narrative that I hear over and over.

Managing Conflict

Mary shared that her extended family did not always provide the support that she needed. They were nice, good grandparents, and willing to watch Mary's daughter so Mary could write but would "easily tire out from taking care of the baby" and then "interrupt her when she was writing." She also said her family did not understand that writing her dissertation was her work, that it was "real" work, and that taking a lot of time to write was how she would be successful. She said,

> I think my big complaint about apparently everyone in my life is that when you are doing scholarship or research, it's very hard to communicate to non-academic people….it's really hard to convince them that you're really working even if you're home or that…even if you have a flexible schedule, you still need like long periods of concentration, so I think I just have a hard time convincing everyone in my life like that this is how I work and that this is real work.

Mary said that she had a challenging interaction with a "high-level administrator" at a departmental event that left her both angry and embarrassed. She and a fellow student decided that they would bring their children to a fall semester welcome party. It was an informal event, the kind of event they could attend with their children. Mary thought it was important to show people that she was still active in the department, and her friend wanted to show that the babies existed, and the women were still pursuing their degrees. Mary relayed what occurred when she went to introduce her daughter to her department's Director,

> We were feeling a little inhibited about the babies. I went up to her [Director] when she was talking to this other person that I didn't know, and he turned out to be a Dean....she was like this is our Dean…and she introduced us as students who were doing good work. And this guy [Dean] says 'Oh, could have been another dissertation chapter' and points at my baby.

Mary laughed nervously and afterward, was "consumed by rage and shame." Mary thought that an administrator at such a high level should know not to make such comments. It also made her question if his comment reflected the thoughts of others that she chose to have a baby instead of writing and therefore was not as dedicated of a student as she should be. She said that the situation "hit her in a really vulnerable place," so she wrote to the department Director about the interaction. The Director confirmed that it was an inappropriate comment but said that the administrator meant it out of solidarity because he was a parent too. Mary was skeptical of the explanation.

Keeping Motivated

From the time she graduated from college with her bachelor's degree, Mary had a ten-year plan for getting an MFA, Ph.D., and having children, and she had not deviated much from her plan. Her friend's comment about there never being a "great time" to have a child helped Mary feel more confident in her decision to start her family while pursuing a doctorate.

Mary said that there were moments when she felt less motivated about her doctorate because she was busy focusing on her family. When asked if her motivation truly changed after having her daughter, Mary responded, "I feel much more committed to finishing my dissertation and doing what I need to do to finish it rather than make it perfect….I realize it is so much harder to work now." Although more committed to completing her doctorate, Mary was concerned about the "depressing realities of job prospects in humanities." She was aware that other graduate students were finding difficulty in securing jobs. When asked about the length of time she needed to complete her dissertation, Mary thought it was realistic that she would complete her degree in two or two and one-half years which would give her time to complete a few publications and not go on the job market with a "hastily finished dissertation."

Mary completed her doctorate in October 2017.

Julia's Story

> Well, I guess we kind of always knew that we would start a family while I was here at [Mid-Atlantic State University] just because you know we didn't want to wait super long to get started. I was…I guess I was 30 when [son - name removed] was born, so we kind of thought you know 30 is a good time to start, and I didn't want to limit myself too much by waiting too long, and we weren't sure how many kids we would want. So, we thought, let's get started, and you know, even though graduate students monetarily are a tough time, you do have a lot of flexible time, so that was a consideration. You know I was able to stay half-days with him when he was very young, so that was really nice to not just have to jump back into 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. work after six weeks, you know which after six weeks I was like how do people just jump back in? You know it just seems so…he seems so little, so I was really glad that we did it now when I had a flexible time.

I met Julia in April 2015. She was pursuing a doctorate in English. She was 32 years old, married, and her son was 23 months old. Her husband was pursuing a master's degree at Mid-Atlantic State University in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) discipline. While pregnant, Julia taught two classes during the fall semester and then did not teach in the spring semester. She tutored in the spring, gave birth to her son a few weeks after the semester ended, and completed a fellowship the following year.

Julia was quick to say that her family was her first priority. "Family. For sure." When asked about her second priority, she spoke of the conflicts many of the participants shared when balancing their own lives. "You know it's [hesitating] teaching probably is number two, and I try so hard to keep it at least even with the research, but it has a way of just taking over. It's hard. Another source of guilt."

Finding Balance

"I try and work from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. every single day….and then pretty much once I get home until [her son – name omitted] goes to sleep I'm just with him. I'm a mom." Tuesdays and Thursdays were spent creating class plans, grading papers, and teaching. Mondays and Fridays were devoted to her dissertation. Wednesdays were half-course prep and grading

and half dissertation writing. Julia said that if she had something immediate, she would tell her husband, "I need to go grade for an hour…and his dad [her husband] will be fine with it, but I try to just have family time after I pick him up from daycare."

Julia shared that she felt really supported by her advisor, a woman on her dissertation committee, and a professor in the English department. When Julia learned she was pregnant, she wrote to her advisor to notify him she would not be able to be involved in any summer programs because she was going to have a baby. She said, "he wrote back congratulations in all caps, which was super relieving to me just to have him be excited for me." He later went on to give her some of his children's baby items like a high chair and a shopping cart cover. She really appreciated his support of her family.

Julia said she received excellent, helpful advice about writing from a member of her dissertation committee. She shared, "Best nugget of advice… just write every day even if it's just a sentence. That was an excellent advice because especially now that I don't have huge swaths of time to devote to writing." Julia hoped to get better at using the snippets of time [she] had" and that it was helpful "to think about writing as something I can do in little bursts."

Julia said that one of the professors was a real role model to the doctoral students because this professor had her children while pursuing a doctorate. Julia relayed the professor's story, "she said that when she had all her kids in grad school [and] that each one represented a chapter to her because like she would try to finish a chapter before giving birth. And she had like four of them [children]." Julia said that it made her realize that "these are all just different forms of labor, but it's all something that I'm producing."

Managing Conflict

Julia was raised by her grandmother, who was a stay-at-home mother. "I was raised by my grandmother, and she was a stay-at-home mom for her kids and for us [Julia]. And so that's the model that she has, and she sees me as not doing that. She sees it as a failure…."

> I love her dearly, but there was one incident. Last summer, we were at home in [state where Julia's grandmother lives] for the whole summer. [My husband – name omitted] was interning at a company there, and I would take half days and go try to write, do my work in the afternoon, and [Julia's son – name omitted] would stay with Grandma. You know we had a little time adjusting, you know he wasn't used to her house and so one time I was leaving, and he was crying, and Grandma said something like 'Well, your Momma just doesn't love you' or something. [nervous laughter]. I looked at her, and I was like, "Why would you say something like that? Just because I'm going off to do my work for a few hours. You know that's crazy." So that was sort of the biggest moment but just little things that she'll say on the phone like well you know you need to rethink this. Maybe you need to… like I'm going to England this summer. She doesn't want me to go. She said, 'I wish you would think about it more. He needs you right now.' I'm like 'well, I know, but you know he'll have his Dad.'

Julia was proud of herself for standing up to her grandmother after the summer visit. Julia noted, "she's starting to come around, but she would prefer it if I would stay home full-time."

Julia discussed a comment made by "a male student, a very young male student" at a program for first-year graduate students. A first-year graduate student asked about having children, and the young man replied, "Why would we want to encourage that lifestyle." Julia thought it "was such weird language…disheartening and strange" but said that some students got angry with the male student for making such a comment. The offending student quickly "understood that's not really how one should talk about having kids."

Julia also discussed an upsetting interaction with a "person of power" at a department event. She and a friend, another graduate student, had brought their children and were speaking to a professor. The professor introduced them as students in the program to the "person of power," and he said, "Oh, so you had a baby instead of writing a dissertation chapter." Julia

received this as him saying, "this is what you did instead of writing" and perceived his comment as an insult. She shared that she and the other student were "shocked and upset," and she "could not think of any witty comebacks at the moment." Julia reported that her friend emailed the professor who had introduced them to the person who commented about their writing to relay their concern and discomfort with the situation. Julia said the professor responded, "I think he meant it as a fellow parent, but you're right he shouldn't have said that, but you know, don't take offense or anything."

Julia also discussed the need for more precise policies related to maternity leave for students during both the TA and fellowship years. She commented, "Nobody talks about what maternity leave is on fellowship. Or like is that even a thing?" and went on to say "you're just going to like take a fellowship and not really do any work, I think if there was a sort of spoken or written acknowledgment of that. Either this is what you do. Or you know maybe we can postpone the fellowship…. Just so there's not the sort of weird guilty feeling like, oh, I should be working, but I'm not because I'm like recovering or you know like should not feel guilty." Julia wanted her department to share a clear policy that included maternity leave, fellowship, insurance, and covered dependents. She says, "None of that is addressed. It seems like the default model of a grad student is someone who is 22 years old and has no kids and no spouse...but that's obviously not always true. So, I think if they would acknowledge that, that would be really nice." She learned about leave, insurance, and fellowships by making calls, reading websites, and speaking with other graduate student mothers.

Keeping Motivated

Julia has been a high school teacher for four years after college and said graduate school was something she always wanted to pursue. She said, "I have always known I would go just

because I really loved writing my undergrad thesis and doing all the research….it was always a goal." Julia shared that her goal was to get a tenure-track faculty position in the western part of the United States because that was where she and her husband had family. If that was not possible, though, she said, "I just want to do something that I feel is fulfilling." In April 2015, Julia was completing her twelfth semester as a doctoral student and awaiting news of the funding that she would receive for the following year. She also hoped to graduate the following May or October at the latest.

Julia was motivated to complete her doctorate for many reasons. She enjoyed the research and considered herself to be a good teacher. She wanted full-time employment, to stop accruing more student loans, and to make plans for her son's future. Lastly, she wanted to be a role model. She said, "I do think it's important for my son and whatever other kids come along to see women in the workforce, women academics, so that motivates me."

Julia completed her doctorate in October 2017.

Marian's Story

> My husband and I always knew that we wanted to have kids. I mean, this is something that we discussed very early in our relationship, and then it was just a matter of figuring out the right time to do it. So we decided that we would wait until after I finished coursework because I didn't think that I could take care of an infant and also be in coursework at the same time because coursework takes, you know, just a different level of being at the department, your presence. You just have to be there a lot, and I didn't think that I could do that while breastfeeding, so we decided to wait until after I finished my coursework. Then I got pregnant while I was waiting for our Ph.D. examinations and actually, that worked out really well because in the English Department they lightened up your teaching and course load…as you are waiting for orals. And so being pregnant while doing lighter teaching and research load just worked out quite nicely for me.

I met Marian in April 2015. Marian was 32 years old and had a three-year-old son. Marian's husband was also a doctoral student at Mid-Atlantic State University, and both she and her husband were graduating at the end of the semester; she would receive a doctorate in

English, and he would receive one from a Social Sciences discipline. Marian was completing her seventh year of doctoral study in April 2015, had recently defended her dissertation, and was planning to graduate that May.

When asked about how she prioritizes the different roles in her life, she did not rank them in number order. Instead, she said,

> In terms of prioritizing all of the different areas, I try to do a little bit every day. When I'm teaching, teaching obviously takes up the most amount of time, the grading, and all of that stuff. So, then I am more forgiving of myself when I don't do as much in terms of my research, but when 4:00 p.m. hits, it's always [son's name] time.

Seeking Balance

Marian said that she struggled with time management. She compared how she worked before the birth of her son to the way she needed to work after his birth. Before she had her son, Marian said,

> My husband and I both being academics, we both worked all the time, and we had no limits to our working hours. And we would work during meals, we just worked all the time and so I really had to figure out in those first few months how to make that mental switch between pre-child, you know working all the time, to post-child, make a schedule and stick to it and block out your work times. And I've done that ever since.

She went on to say,

> I guess trying to get all of the things done that I feel like I need to get done in a shorter number of hours than I would have if I didn't have a child. You know that has been a challenge, but again I try to look at it as an opportunity to work better and faster. I don't always succeed in looking at it that way, but I do try to look at it that way.

Much of Marian's observations about time management, household responsibilities, and childcare reflected the shared experience of being a dual-academic couple and their partnership in balancing the needs of their family. Marian spoke at length about the flexibility of a dual-doctoral student schedule and how it allowed for time management and sharing of home and childcare responsibilities. Marian commented,

> People say that it's harder to be an academic parent when your partner is also an academic but just because of the instability of the job and the income which that has all been true, but there is also just the flexibility in the schedules that have allowed us to support each other I think in wonderful ways, and I really feel like we are a partnership, and after I stopped breastfeeding my son at age one, we really have done equal amounts of labor for him. My husband probably does a little bit more in terms of just playing outside with him on the playground during winter when it's cold and, I don't' want to be out there you know so he's a little bit better at just like being okay with that so, I felt that you know having a graduate student as a spouse has been really beneficial,

Marian also spoke about setting a schedule, so she had adequate time to plan her courses, grade, teach, write, and then have dedicated hours to spend time with her son as a family. She also compared the time she spends with her son to the time her non-academic friends who work 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. jobs can spend with the children. She said,

> In terms of prioritizing all of the different areas, I try to do a little bit every day. When I'm teaching, teaching obviously takes up the most amount of time, the grading, and all of that stuff. So then, I am more forgiving of myself when I don't do as much in terms of my research, but when 4:00 p.m. hits, it's always [son's] time. You know 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. or whatever is always [son's] time and you know there are moments during the evenings when my husband and I can trade-off. One of us will go upstairs to work, and the other person will play with [son] or do stuff with [son] but, you know that's all…in my mind those are all extra hours, you know that's just like extra time that I can sneak in to do my work. It's not time that I've allotted to do work, I don't allot work time in the evenings because that is time for my son and as he gets older, now I just feel like these are precious, precious moments that are just floating away, and it does make me anxious sometimes that I'm not spending enough time with him. But then I think of my friends who are working 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. jobs, and I think that they're not necessarily spending more time with their kids because they are away at work for eight hours of the day, longer if people have commutes. So I actually do spend maybe more time with him than my friends who are working 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. jobs, it's just that when you're an academic your work spills over into your life so much that you always kind of feel like you're at work or you're thinking about your work sometimes when it's not work time. So, it feels like you are sort of tied to work in a way that people who work 9:00 to 5:00 jobs are not. But in terms of the physical amount of time that I'm spending with my son, it's not less, and at times more than what my friends who work 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. jobs can spare so then I don't feel so bad.

Marian shared that after learning that she was pregnant, she actively sought advice from the faculty who are mothers, and she has incorporated that advice as to how she works and structures her time. She was grateful for receiving such helpful advice. Marian shared,

> After I revealed that I was pregnant, I actively sought advice from people that I knew had had children while they were…not while they were graduate students but faculty members who have had children. So, I talked to our graduate Chair at the time…. she had her child while she was a faculty member here at Rutgers, and she sort of gave me advice as to how I could get back to work after having the baby. And you know, it was on her advice that I carved out those couple of working sessions for myself during the day. Her advice was you know [to] do that every day, even if you get nothing done during that time, still carve out those hours, those are just working times, times when you actually leave the house…. and it will be hard at first because you'll be thinking about the baby and it makes it hard to work, but after a while, you will get used to it, and you'll train yourself to be able to block out your working hours in that way.

Marian also connected with the other graduate student mothers in the department. She said that they were not a "support group that meets regularly," but they had a nice relationship with each other, had met each other's children, planned playdates, shared information about childcare providers, and even volunteered to watch each other's children, if available. She said, "we know that we can rely on one another….I think it has brought a lot of the women closer."

Managing Conflict

Marian shared that, initially, daycare was a financial challenge for her. Her son attended a corporate daycare, and although it was a good experience, and they were pleased with the program, it simply was not affordable. She relayed,

> We had him in [daycare] for nine months. And he loved it there, and we loved the teachers, it was great. We just couldn't afford it. So we knew that we'd have to be taking him out at some point, so we started looking for other possibilities and asking around and stuff, and we found this wonderful woman who runs a daycare out of her home and so we send him there and cut our daycare expenses in half. Unbelievable, it was amazing. So that is one thing that I didn't think to do the research before having him, and I would say that you definitely should.

Keeping Motivated

Marian was seeking a faculty position, and she and her husband were looking for colleges and universities that would employ both of them. Because a dual-career academic employment opportunity is difficult to find, they were searching in metro areas where a large number of colleges and universities would be located in a commutable distance from one another. When discussing the challenges of a two-academic job search, Marian shared that she had been offered a tenure-track position at a university in the Northwest. She did not accept this position because employment was not available to her husband, and there were no colleges or universities in a commutable distance. Soon after, her husband was offered a tenure-track position at a university in a large city in the Midwest. That university also provided Marian with a one-year visiting faculty position. There were many colleges and universities within an hour commute, so they accepted this opportunity and moved to the Midwest.

Marian believed that her motivation to pursue and complete a doctorate increased after having her son. She shared, "I'm invested in the work that I do, and I'm invested in getting a job and getting a good life for all of us as a family and less invested in the kind of what I would call the petty stuff, the smaller stuff." She focused her energy on creating a life for her family and getting a satisfying job that compensated her appropriately so she could provide for her son and any future children.

Marian completed her doctorate in May 2015.

Eva's Story

> Like I said, when I got pregnant, it was my second semester here…in the master's program…If I don't go [continue to take class], I'd have to turn back [return scholarship funding], go back to [home country], but my husband is doing doctorate so he can't come with us, so it's like we don't want to be separated and also because of the scholarship and because of my dreams, dream job [university professor on home country] I have to continue my doctorate…

I met Eva in May 2015. Eva was 29 years old, married and the mother of an 18 month-old girl. Eva was an international student from the Middle East, and both she and her husband received scholarships to pursue graduate work at Mid-Atlantic State University. The scholarships were granted by their home country. In addition to receiving scholarships, upon returning home, Eva and her husband would receive jobs as university professors in their academic fields. Eva had already completed a master's degree at Mid-Atlantic State University and completed the first year of classes for a doctorate in Education. When asked, Eva said she would have her daughter again while in graduate school, but if she could do it over, she would have given birth during her first year of coursework in the master's program. Eva ranked her priorities with her daughter first, and her doctoral studies last. "Being a wife and taking care of the house" was second, and teaching was third.

Seeking Balance

Eva's mother and mother-in-law often took turns traveling from their home country to Mid-Atlantic State University to stay with Eva and her family. Her mother and mother-in-law would watch Eva's daughter when Eva attended class or needed to study. If Eva had a class, teaching conflict, or a strict deadline she needed to meet, her husband would watch their daughter if that did not conflict with his schedule.

Eva shared that she considered an instructor from her master's program to be her role model and mentor. The instructor was pregnant when Eva was a student in her class. When Eva was stressed by the demands of her doctoral program and raising her daughter, Eva would think about her this instructor. Eva believed they were in similar situations as doctoral students and mothers of young children. Eva would tell herself, "she [instructor] is doing that [motherhood, teaching, doctoral study]…I can do that." When Eva would confide in her mentor about feeling

inattentive to her daughter because of the time she spent studying, her mentor would tell her that "it's normal to have a baby and these conflicts and these challenges…Just give yourself time." This mentor was a positive influence on Eva's life and provided a role model in expanding her family with a second child, how she designed courses, choose reading materials, and provided instruction. Eva felt close to this instructor.

Managing Conflict

Eva's husband was also a graduate student and TA at Mid-Atlantic State University. Eva tried to plan a course and teaching schedule for herself that was "appropriate, suitable to [her] husband's schedule." Her husband's schedule had him leaving their apartment between 8:00 a.m., and 9:00 a.m., arriving home around 5:00 p.m. and getting together with friends in their community when there were breaks in his academic schedule.

Eva said she struggled with time management and exhaustion, trying different schedules to create time to complete all her schoolwork. First, she tried to study at night after her daughter fell asleep. Later, Eva tried sleeping when her daughter slept but would wake up between 2:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. to do schoolwork. Eva would be taking qualifying exams in the near future and was concerned about having adequate time to successfully complete the exams. She worried, "How am I going to organize my time? How am I going to write the papers?"

Although Eva's mother and mother-in-law often visited and provided childcare so Eva could attend classes and study, they did not help with any household chores such as cooking, cleaning, or laundry. Eva's husband did not share responsibility in completing household chores either. Eva said that during her first year at Mid-Atlantic State University, her mother-in-law would ask her when she would be having a baby. Eva reflected, "other than that, they are not interfering." Now that Eva and her husband had a daughter, her mother-in-law would ask if

Eva's daughter was "going to have a sister or brother." Eva said she did not seriously take the comments about having a second child.

Keeping Motivated

Eva said that her motivation to complete her degree had fluctuated since giving birth to her daughter. She would reflect upon the life that she and her husband had before accepting the scholarship to travel to the United States and to pursue doctoral degrees. She would miss her friends and family at home and would fall back to those feelings of unsettledness when stressed. Even through homesickness, Eva was happy to be a student at Mid-Atlantic State University, including the opportunity she has been given and her future career path when she completed her doctorate.

Eva was motivated to persist because she liked the professor title; she congratulated and admired that she would have a degree, a faculty position, and a family in a few years. She would be a success.

Eva completed her doctorate in October 2018.

Drew's Story

> I got married in 2010. I was married and had the support of my husband in pursuing higher education. It's one of those things that you have your family goals, and you also have your professional goals. And so, it just happened to work that way.
>
> I ended up getting pregnant in 2012. Actually, it worked out that I was actually towards the end of my coursework when I ended up giving birth. So, it just worked out that way. It wasn't something that I planned. It wasn't.

I met Drew in June 2015. Drew was employed full-time as a college administrator at a nearby state university, 32 years old, married, and the mother of a girl who was two and a half years old. Drew was completing her fourth year of doctoral study and coding her dissertation

research. We had a check-in conversation in December 2015, and Drew was writing Chapter Five of her dissertation with hopes of defending early in the spring.

Drew also ranked four priorities. The family was first and "work even though it's towards the bottom of my priority list" was second. An organization she volunteered with was usually her third priority, but with being so close to completing her dissertation, her doctoral work had moved into third place.

Seeking Balance

Drew spoke at length about the support and assistance with childcare that she received from her mother. Drew's mother watched her daughter during the workday and often on the weekends so Drew could have time to work on her dissertation. In fact, Drew's mother was watching her daughter at home, so we could meet on a weekend morning to complete the interview protocol.

Drew said that she really did not have a lot of family in the area, and it was her mother who helped and supported in her ability to try and complete her dissertation. She said that although her mother may not understand the details of the work required to complete a doctorate, her mother was providing her the space and time to accomplish her goal.

Drew spoke about "being fair" to her husband and mother and not "take advantage" of the requests for support. She did not "want them to feel like I'm overdoing it. And so sometimes it's balancing, you know, and not doing it [leaving to write/asking for childcare] every weekend. So maybe one weekend I'll take one day, or I'll take an hour or two to work. And then the next weekend I know I'm not going to be able to do that. And kind of trying to find some sort of balance."

Drew was also concerned with the perception that she was not spending enough time with her daughter; that her mother would question why she was asked to babysit again, and why Drew was not home watching her own daughter. Drew admitted that this was her personal battle.

Drew shared that she had a writing buddy, a woman in her doctoral program with two older children. Drew said that regardless of the woman's age and the age of her children, "motherhood is motherhood," and the woman had given support and shared advice about mothering. This woman told Drew, "not to feel guilty." Drew reflected,

> I think it's easy to really feel guilty about the time that I'm dedicating to outside of the home. Whether it be school or work. And it's very easy to feel guilty that you're not spending that time with [your] child….especially the fact that my daughter's so young. And that she's probably not going to remember as much

Drew's writing buddy enforced that Drew should "just try and get it done now while she's [Drew's daughter] young. And to not feel guilty. And also, you know, to be easy on myself. I can't do it all at the same time." Drew reflected again,

> You know there's going to be those times where I have to put school to the side to focus on what I need to do. Whether it be home or work. And there's going to be times that I have to take that time for myself to get school done. So, it's been great advice. One doesn't always follow it. It's you know easier said than done.

Managing Conflict

Drew shared an incident that showed that not all advice should be heeded. Labeled as an obstacle by Drew, she said that a faculty member suggested taking a break from pursuing her doctorate after the birth of her daughter. She said the advice was "not what I wanted to hear. It was not helpful, and it's not what I had intended to do. So, I didn't take a break. I finished out the semester because it was going to be my last semester anyway."

Drew went on to discuss the challenge of the doctoral qualifying exam, not the exam itself, but the inflexibility in taking it to adhere to the schedule of a cohort-model doctorate and

the timing of the exam with the birth of her daughter. Drew received the qualifying exam just two weeks after giving birth to her daughter. She had inquired about delaying the exam and said the concern was that students have one opportunity to retake the exam if they do not pass. Delaying the exam would negate the ability to retake the exam should she not pass. Additionally, delaying the exam would cause her to fall out of sync with her cohort. She said it was a bigger hassle to delay than just take the exam. About taking the exam, Drew said, "I don't even know how I got it done to be quite honest with you since I think I was still in a fog." Despite the post-baby exhaustion and fog, Drew passed the qualifying exam.

Keeping Motivated

Drew shared that she had considered leaving the program and transferring into a different one before having her daughter. She did not change programs because there were "too many things at stake," and she felt that it was selfish because she was married, wanted children, and knew that change extends the time required to complete her degree.

Drew shared that she took persisting in the doctorate "one week at a time." She used the word "hurdles" to describe the things that she needed to get through in pursuit of the degree: defending, finding a topic, finding participants, coding. She persisted because of stubbornness." She said,

> I owe it to everyone around me to get it done. Having gone through all of this and asking so much of people and then not doing it, I feel like that would be even worse. I feel like it would have been in vain. So, I feel like I owe it to everyone around me who has been helping me.

Drew shared that she would regret not completing the doctorate. Completing it was a sense of accomplishment for both herself and her family.

Drew completed her degree in May 2016.

Summary

It is commendable that all nine participants completed their doctorate. Time to completion ranged from 4 years to 11 years, and on average, the students completed in 7.2 years. The National Science Foundation (2017) reported that the median years to complete a doctorate was 5.8 years with Education students completing in 5.8 years, Social Science students in 6.0 years and Humanities students in 6.8 years. Cross-case analysis shows that the participants reported a high level of mentoring and emotional support from faculty. Literature discusses the importance of faculty who model successful coupling of career and family responsibilities yet suggests it is difficult for doctoral student mothers to find. It is likely that faculty support and role modeling was a factor in the success of the participants. For certain participants, there was a difference in their ideology and practice of motherhood than that of their families. Amy and Julia spoke extensively about their respective parents and grandmother's disappointment in their educational pursuits and how they balanced the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood.

Chapter Five will answer the first three research questions and present an examination of the strategies the doctoral student mothers used to achieve balance, the conflicts they experienced when managing their different roles, and their motivation to persist while simultaneously pursuing motherhood and doctoral education.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

A review of the literature and studies on women who manage work and family while pursuing a research doctorate included feminist theories of gender roles and mothering through discussion of liberal and poststructural feminist theories. The literature of the motherhood mystique, cultural constructions of motherhood, intensive mothering, and responses to that ideology were explored. Utilizing the notion of narratives of constraint and possibility outlined by Ward and Wolf-Wendel, the literature on perspectives of motherhood in academia were discussed. Lastly, literature that focused on the experiences of graduate and doctoral student mothers was examined. This literature was used to analyze the lived experiences of student mothers who were "completers" to learn how they managed work and family while pursuing a research doctorate. A response to the first three research questions is included in this chapter.

Research Question One: What strategies do doctoral student mothers use to try to achieve a reasonable balance among their roles?

The participants in this study utilized three main strategies to achieve balance in their roles: time management and compartmentalization, delegation of childcare and home responsibilities, and accepting mentoring and support.

Time Management and Compartmentalization

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) suggest that "freedom and responsibility go hand and hand" (p. 53). With a professor's flexible work schedule comes a high level of work responsibility, including teaching, research, publishing, and service to the university. This can be applied to doctoral students. With the student's flexible schedule comes a high level of work responsibility, including coursework, research, teaching, qualifying exams, and dissertation. Both academia and parenthood are greedy institutions, and each demand to wholly encompass

one's time, commitment, energy, and loyalty (Coser, 1974). To balance the greedy nature and competing demands of work, family, and school, participants created a clear plan for each day that included separate time for work, family, and school. Unknowingly, they followed the advice of Marion's advisor and "carved out working sessions" and left their homes to write and the advice of Victoria's advisor, who suggested a "blueprint." Notable were the discussions with Julia, Marian, and Amy, who compartmentalized their weekdays to teach, grade, complete course prep, and write until the late-afternoon, similar to the traditional work schedule that Kaitlyn had as a college administrator. For the four women, evenings were dedicated to their children and were spent eating dinner together as a family, ensuring homework was completed, and enjoying playtime and baths. Similarly, Kate spent three weekdays each week teaching, grading papers, and preparing for classes. The other two weekdays were spent with her son and completing housework. Weekend days provided time for Kate to complete dissertation writing.

Delegation of Childcare and Home Responsibilities

To balance work, mothering, and doctoral study, many participants delegated childcare and housework responsibilities to their husbands and partners. Kaitlyn shared that at her house, Dad did the typical mom-thing: cook dinner, give baths, and supervise homework. Amy's husband was a stay-at-home-dad and cared for their children, prepared meals, and did housework. Kate's partner watched their son on the weekends so she could work on her dissertation. Mary's husband took responsibility for everything but feeding their newborn daughter. He also watched their daughter on the weekend when Mary needed to write. Julia's husband cooked dinner three nights each week. Marian said she and her husband did equal amounts of labor for their son, and perhaps her husband did a bit more than her.

To understand the significance of the participant's delegation of childcare and home responsibilities, one must analyze cultural constructions of motherhood and both liberal and poststructural feminist theory. The motherhood mystique and intensive mothering ideology theorize that women alone can provide the level of care a child requires and that care should be all-encompassing and self-sacrificing for the mother. Those constructions of motherhood exclude women from the public sphere, delegate her to the home, and do not provide her the ability to pursue a doctorate. Liberal feminism suggests that women participate in the public sphere but not invite men into the private sphere. In fact, Friedan (1974) wrote that women should do housework "quickly and efficiently" to leave time for "creative work" outside the home (p. 330). Liberal feminist thought provides women with the agency to pursue a doctorate yet, also shouldering the burden of children and housework. This burden is the "second shift;" women perform a full day of paid labor and then perform a second shift of work at home when caring for their families (Hochschild, 1989). Hochschild (1989) did not suggest that only women perform labor at home, but that the labor performed by men and women is different. Men's childcare and home responsibilities are flexible and center on play, fun excursions with children, and home repair, while women's responsibilities are time-sensitive like cooking, bathing children, grocery shopping, and maintaining the family calendar. Poststructural feminist thought provides the opportunity for change regarding the division of labor (Weedon, 1997).

Mentoring and Support

Research by Kurtz-Costes et al. (2006) suggests that women doctoral students are "concerned with personal well-being" like health, happiness, social connection, and a sense of purpose (p. 152). They are also concerned with how the decisions they made in academia affect their roles as wives and mothers. Women doctoral students acknowledged the importance of

“having a woman mentor who modeled a lifestyle – combining family and successful career – that these students sought for themselves” (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006). Female doctoral students in Lynch (2008) confirmed student appreciation for advisors who “got” their lives as mothers.

The participants in this dissertation study spoke about the importance of professors, faculty advisors, and mentors. Although not all of the participant's mentors were faculty members, they all presented more contemporary beliefs and attitudes about motherhood, work, and graduate students by exhibiting an understanding of the challenges the participants faced when balancing work, family, and motherhood. The mentors and providers of support validated the participants' multiple roles and helped them find balance within the roles by providing emotional support and constructive advice generated from their own lived experiences.

Kaitlyn's role model was a college administrator who completed her doctorate when her children were young. This role model read drafts, provided feedback that helped construct Kaitlyn's dissertation, and had a number of conversations with Kaitlyn about the challenges and "emotional struggles" of combining work, family, and doctoral study. When Kaitlyn's son was born during the middle of a semester, the professor teaching the class provided flexibility in completing work and encouraged Kaitlyn to bring her son to class. Victoria's advisor was accepting when Victoria announced her pregnancy and advised her to create a "workable schedule" and a "blueprint" for working towards the completion of her dissertation after the birth of her daughter. The English Department administrator that had her child after becoming a professor advised Marian to create "working sessions" and physically separate herself to write. Julia was advised to "just write every day even if it's just a sentence," which Julia thought was good advice because she did not have long periods to write after having her son. Julia shared that one professor gave birth to four children while in graduate school and would share that

experience with the students. The words of Eva's mentor summed up what the participants needed to hear. She would tell Eva, "it's normal to have…these conflicts and these challenges….Just give yourself time."

Research Question Two: What conflicts do doctoral student mothers experience when managing their different roles?

The participants in this study experienced three main conflicts when managing their different roles: financial constraints and health insurance, differences in cultural expectations, and structural lag.

Financial Constraints and Health Insurance

Finances and health insurance are concerns for all graduate students. A graduate student's compensation is not stable and changes yearly depending on the terms of their contract. Graduate Assistant, Teaching Assistant, and fellowship provide different levels of financial compensation and opportunities for health insurance. Compensation packages provide funding for a limited number of years, and when they are exhausted, graduate students may need to seek other opportunities for paid employment. Additional work utilizes time that otherwise could be spent on coursework and writing. Switching from full-time to part-time student status might relieve some of the financial burdens for tuition, but it could also slow momentum and progress towards degree completion. Additionally, switching to part-time status requires graduate students to begin repaying any student loans they may have accumulated for their education.

It is important to emphasize for purposes of this study, that the means to alleviate financial concerns can exaggerate conflicts in work-life balance for doctoral student mothers. Limited financial means and insurance must support at least one more person. Additional part-time work could require other childcare expenses and time away from one's child. It seems like a

zero-sum game where a solution to a financial concern creates a conflict in another aspect of the student's life, causing the student to reprioritize their responsibilities to find balance in their roles as worker, student, and mother.

Eight of the nine participants indicated finances as a source of concern. Eva said that her graduate package included tuition, health insurance, housing, and a stipend. When provided the opportunity, she would teach as a part-time lecturer for additional pay, and she alone was not concerned about finances. A change in employment for Kaitlyn required her to take loans to offset tuition and childcare costs and question how she would purchase a new car needed to commute to work and campus. The confluence of the conclusion of Victoria's doctoral student support package with her husband's unemployment caused her to switch to part-time student status, which required her to begin repayment of student loans. This left her without health insurance, so she needed to bear that additional expense too. She considered taking a full-time job, but that would further delay her degree completion. Kate was concerned that when her graduate student compensation package expired, she would lose health insurance and struggle to pay daycare expenses for her son.

Difference in Cultural Expectations

Although several participants spoke about supportive spouses and extended family, some participants discussed situations with family members whose beliefs about the role and goals of women as mothers caused conflicts. Julia's family adhered to more traditional views of mothering and encouraged strict separate spheres and intensive mothering. Julia discussed her grandmother's lack of support for her doctoral study. Her grandmother was a stay-at-home mother and wanted the same for Julia. Julia shared that her grandmother viewed her as a failure, and during Julia's last visit to her grandmother's house, her grandmother told Julia's son, "Your

Momma just doesn't love you," and Julia questioned why she would do that. Julia was proud that she advocated for herself with her grandmother.

Amy's family encouraged women's participation in the public sphere, provided the career was one that was both privileged and of limited scope. Amy's family was not supportive of her doctoral pursuit, academic interests, Fulbright, and travel abroad opportunities, or that she had adopted two children. She said they would much prefer she marry a doctor and become a pediatrician who worked 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Amy recognized that she enjoyed her rebellion and was proud of all she had accomplished.

Eva's family also prescribed to a more traditional division of responsibilities for men and women and that perhaps the traditional division was more widely culturally acceptable in their country of origin. Eva had childcare assistance from her mother and mother-in-law when they visited but had minimal assistance with childcare and no assistance with house chores (cleaning, laundry, cooking) from her husband. Eva did not ask her husband to do any work beyond occasional care for their daughter. Instead, she faulted herself and her inability to manage her time for her struggle to keep up with the demands of her various roles.

Structural Lag

A structural lag occurs when social structures lag behind the changes in people's lives Riley and Riley (1994). The data showed that in some ways, Mid-Atlantic State University was slow to accommodate and be transparent about policies that affect the needs of the students. Participants cited different health insurance benefits for TA and fellowship contracts; maternity leave opportunities for doctoral students; the lack of lactation space and child changing stations in restrooms; and campus childcare as structural issues and services at the university that are lagging behind in meeting the needs of students. Although entitled, Kate did not take maternity

leave, relaying that when she met with the department chair, he discussed the expense for the department and gave the impression that use of leave would not be appreciated, and she would be "screwing" the department. A lack of maternity leave caused her to grade final exams and submit final grades a few days after giving birth. Julia shared that the English Department has the "red book," a manual of sorts that outlines student progression through the doctorate. It does not contain information on the policy for maternity leave, fellowship, or health insurance for dependents, though. Mary and Julia planned pregnancies to overlap with fellowship, although they were unsure if there was a policy or guidelines for doing so. Drew shared that she received her doctoral qualifying exams two weeks after giving birth to her daughter. She inquired about delaying the exam and said it was a bigger hassle to delay than take. MASU has clear maternity leave and health insurance information for staff and faculty outlined on the Human Resources website, but the information for TAs and GAs on that website does not provide any details about different health insurance coverage for TA and fellowship years nor does it outline the maternity leave available. This is information that students need to know, and students have the right to use the benefits that accompany their job. Social structures show lag behind the changes in student's lives when a student like Kate is discouraged from taking leave because the department either did not have or did not want to use their financial resources for the benefit of a graduate student, departments provide a handbook or the university provides a website that does not outline, clearly and transparently, life events that could occur during progression through the doctorate.

Limited lactation space in 2014 and 2015 concerned the participants. Victoria's department provided her with an office after her daughter was born because a "shared" office did not provide privacy. Amy's department provided a lactation space in their department space in 2015, but not when she gave birth to her son. Amy would pump in the restroom between classes.

Julia said she was "a little bit miffed" about the lack of space and commented, "it seems like that would be something that could happen. If nobody's thought about it or nobody's made anybody else think about it….I mean I do understand why they haven't because nobody, you know, decided it was important." In 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act amended the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 mandating that employers needed to provide employees with time to express milk for a nursing child for up to one year after the child's birth and use of a secure, private location that was not a bathroom where the employee could express milk. In 2015, there were no public lactation spaces on campus for staff, faculty, or students. In 2020 there are three: one at a Student Center on a campus that houses the women's residential college, one in a library on the historic campus, and one in a classroom building on the campus that houses many of the science departments and medical school. Two of the five campuses do not have public lactation spaces. These five campuses serve approximately 50,000 students. A lack of public lactation space after a mandate from the U.S. Department of Labor and now only three public lactation spaces is a structural lag.

The participants also discussed the need for affordable, flexible childcare on campus. There are three childcare locations on campus, one for autistic children, one for children over one-year-old and one for children over two-years-old. They operate from approximately 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. There are a handful of corporate childcare locations near campus, and both campus and corporate centers provide a modest discount to staff and faculty. The childcare centers are not affordable for many graduate students. Miriam commented that her son attended one, and they needed to find another more affordable location. Additionally, the centers accommodate those who work traditional business hours. Graduate students take and teach classes from 8:10 a.m. until 11:00 p.m., and those who have children might need childcare in the

evening. The lack of affordable childcare during all hours that might be needed by doctoral student mothers is a structural lag because the system does not meet the price point or hours that people need.

A lack of information about maternity leave, fellowship, and health insurance for dependents; a lack of services such as lactations space, child changing stations, and childcare facilities; and difficulty in altering one's academic program to accommodate life events gives the impression that doctoral programs and college campuses meet the needs of the ideal student; white, affluent, and unencumbered men. It also infers that doctoral student mothers and other students with children should employ bias avoidance strategies such as planning babies to be born during the summer or during a fellowship year to not take maternity leave out of fear and therefore not requiring the university to provide support (Drago et al., 2006).

Research Question Three: What motivates women to persist in the doctoral program while simultaneously pursuing motherhood, work, and a doctoral degree?

This research question will be addressed in three sections: participant's initial motivation to pursue a doctorate, why participants choose to have a child or multiple children while pursuing a doctorate, and participant's motivation to persist in a doctoral program while simultaneously pursuing motherhood. Analysis of the findings in these areas will provide a rich understanding of the student's motivations to engage in doctoral education, both before and after becoming mothers.

Eight of the nine participants were motivated to pursue a doctorate for career opportunities in academia. Victoria wanted to teach at a small liberal arts college and eventually be a diversity office administrator. Amy, like many of the participants, wanted to be a professor at a small liberal arts college or a research university. Kaitlyn alone pursued a doctorate for

reasons unrelated to her career, as she said: "to do something that was about me." Although not pursuing a faculty position, Drew sought a doctorate for advancement and opportunities in higher education administration.

Three women, Kaitlyn, Amy, and Eva, were mothers before commencing a research doctorate. For two of the women, pregnancy was a surprise, but the others planned to simultaneously become mothers and pursue a doctoral degree. The reasons to have a child while pursuing a doctorate pointed to "time." Participants noted they "had the time," meaning hours in the day and flexibility in their schedule. Participants noted it "was the time," meaning they were emotionally prepared and at a stage of their relationship where a child was a welcome addition to their family. Participants noted it is "never the right or perfect time" because one never has enough hours, emotional preparation, or finances to meet the needs of a baby. Lastly, participants noted "time was running out" because they were concerned about advancing age and the link between maternal age and fertility. Some participants, like Julia, wanted to ensure they could increase the size of their family either later in their doctoral journey or after they completed their degree so, to try and preserve the opportunity to have a second child in the future, the women needed to have their first child in graduate school.

Time became a conundrum, a problem or puzzle to solve, for the participants. They reported that they thought graduate school was a good time to have a child and their schedule was flexible, although once they had a child, they realized the need for better time management, compartmentalization, delegation of childcare and house responsibilities to their spouse, and mentors and role models who could help support and guide them through the completion of their degree.

As the participants progressed through the doctoral process, and their children got older, they were more motivated to complete their degrees. The women cited five items that motivated them to persist: opportunities for tenure-track teaching, research positions, and advancement in administrative positions; financial security and health care benefits; feeling an overall sense of accomplishment and being a role model to their children and those in the graduate student pipeline; time to focus on their children and enjoy their development as they get older; and regret if they did not complete the degree that they spent so many years trying to achieve. Doctoral students want to secure employment after completing a degree that they trained for over a long period, and often at a great expense. They want an appropriate salary and health insurance. They want to feel a sense of accomplishment. But a nuance of the motivation for the participants in this study is that their accomplishment was their family's accomplishment too. The rewards for achievement were not centered on themselves; the doctoral student mothers persisted for their children and families. Kaitlyn wanted her family to be proud of her and to realize they could complete a doctorate too. Victoria wanted to be a role model for her stepdaughter. Amy wanted to be someone her family could rely on and see as successful. Julia wanted to make plans for her son's future and be a role model. Marian was interested in creating a good life for her family. For Drew, it was an accomplishment for her and her entire family.

Summary

The findings from this dissertation research provide answers to questions about strategies that doctoral student mothers use to achieve balance in their different roles, conflicts they experience when managing their different roles, and their motivation to persist while simultaneously pursuing motherhood and a doctoral education. Time management and compartmentalization, delegations of childcare and home responsibilities, and accepting

mentoring and support were strategies that helped women achieve balance in their roles. Financial constraints and inconsistent health insurance, differences in cultural expectations than family, and structural lags in academia were conflicts for women to overcome while managing their different roles. What the future would bring--career opportunities, financial security, a feeling of accomplishment, time to enjoy their families and no feelings of regret for a goal unfulfilled-- motivated the participants to persist. Chapter Six will provide a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, limitations, lessons learned, implications for practice and policy, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how doctoral student mothers managed work and family while pursuing a research doctorate. The strategies that the participants used, the conflicts the participants experienced, and the participant's motivations to persist were investigated. Although women are the majority of doctoral recipients, there is limited research on degree completers. Other research has often concentrated on experiences of non-completers, reasons for high attrition rates, and how motherhood has impacted a student's graduate school experience. My study differentiated itself with the use of narrative inquiry that told the experiences of nine doctoral completers who were mothers of children five years old or younger and the women's motivation to persist in a doctoral program while simultaneously pursuing motherhood, work, and education.

The literature review outlined feminist theory, gender roles, the concept of the motherhood mystique and critiques of intensive mothering, and research on motherhood and academia. The participant profiles for Kaitlyn, Victoria, Amy, Kate, Mary, Julia, Marian, Eva, and Drew provide stories of the lived experiences of graduate student mothers as they manage work and family while pursuing a research doctorate. Here I discuss elements of their stories that either reinforced or countered the literature on doctoral student mothers. I conclude with limitations and recommendations for future research, and implications for practice which responds to the fourth reseach question about contribution to educational practice and policy.

Faculty and Family Support

Kurtz-Costes et al. (2006) found that doctoral students had less stress, more confidence, were more motivated, and showed greater commitment to academia "when faculty validated the importance of personal relationships and family matters, and helped students find a balance

between personal and professional lives" (p. 152). Faculty gender was not as crucial as the faculty member's values. Yet, women students appreciated “having a woman mentor who modeled a lifestyle – combining family and a successful career – that these students sought after for themselves” (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006, p. 152). Kurtz-Costes et al. also noted that female doctoral students considered how decisions would affect their role as a mother and benefitted when that was respected by faculty. Almost all of the participants in my study made helpful connections with a faculty member. Victoria and Julia shared the experience of some professors offering congratulations and giving them baby gear that they used with their own children. Kaitlyn and Amy benefitted from other professors providing a flexible attendance policy and extensions to complete coursework. Many received mentoring on how to manage and compartmentalize time to provide space for work, school, and family based on the professor's experience as a mother in academia.

Spouses, partners, and parents showed support by acknowledging through their words and actions that doctoral completion and motherhood were important. Taking responsibility for childcare and housework responsibilities provided the participants with the time for classwork or work on their dissertation. Not expecting them to work the second shift was important to the family dynamics that provided space for the participants to achieve their goals.

Working Mothers

The literature on motherhood focuses on the ideology of intensive mothering, that mothers should be self-sacrificing and the primary caregiver to their child(ren) (Hays, 1996) and research on working mothers and equity issues in motherhood and mothering that counters it. The study participants eschewed intensive mothering, ideal worker, and ideal student norms and embraced being working mothers who balanced work, school, and mothering. Similar to the full-

time employed mothers researched by Johnston and Swanson (2006), many participants in my study discussed the importance of quality time, feeling pulled in many directions, and not always being able to spend the amount of time they wanted with their children. Time management and compartmentalization, often suggested by mentors, helped my participants maintain separate home and work spheres. The overlap of home and work was also a challenge of Johnston and Swanson's study participants. Seven of the nine participants said that their children and families were their first priority and the two who did not say this made their children and families the focus of their evenings and weekends. Five participants used the services of child-care centers, three relied on grandmothers, and one father provided childcare. In addition to being doctoral students, all participants were engaged in work for pay in some capacity, yet none expressed any real concern, guilt, or remorse about being away from their children while they were engaged with school or work. Putting children and family first did not equate to denying themselves an education or pursuit of professional opportunities.

Life-Course Perspectives

Han and Moen (1999) describe life-course perspectives as the integrative study of people's lives, specifically how aspects of one's life are prioritized depending on one's phase of life. Participants spoke of seeking balance, managing conflicts, and motivation from the perspective of a student managing work, school, and motherhood. All participants spoke about how they envisioned their life when they completed their doctorate. They were hoping for tenure-track faculty positions or promotions in college administration. They anticipated financial stability and adequate health insurance for themselves and their families. Some planned to travel, others spoke of having more children, and all awaited enjoying free time when the stress of the doctorate was behind them. This was an important life-course perspective, that completion of the

doctorate would change the trajectory of their life and aspects of their work and family life. It is also important to add that the next phase of life could present new priorities and also new challenges, for example related to the tenure-track or older and/or more children.

Sheer Determination

Women are the majority of doctoral students, and doctoral degree recipients, yet there remains a litany of challenges to women's doctoral achievement. Time to degree completion is longer for women than men. Women are nine percentage points behind men in completing doctoral degrees within six years, and 25 percent of women compare to 18 percent of men finish between the seventh and tenth year (Schmidt, 2008). This can be expensive, defeating, and delay one's ability to progress in the pipeline from doctoral student to tenure track professor or non-academic professional. Damaske (2013) suggests that mothers are challenged by the motherhood bind when balancing work, school, and mothering responsibilities and this bind forces them to prioritize, if not actually choose one over the other. Some participants shared that they considered leaving their doctoral program but also said that they did not withdraw because they were motivated, driven, and determined to finish.

Strategies for achieving a reasonable balance of home, work, and school responsibilities included time management and compartmentalization, delegation of childcare and home responsibilities, and accepting mentoring and support and helped doctoral student mothers persist to graduation. Financial constraints, the difference in cultural expectations, and structural lag were conflicts they had to address in balancing their roles. Some participants had greater access and opportunities to utilize the strategies, and some participants experienced conflicts to a greater degree. Yet, all participants persisted and completed their doctorate. Some wrote from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. while their child was at daycare. Others wrote in the evenings and early hours of

the mornings when their children were asleep. What is similar is they wrote. Whether they completed as a result of the support or despite the challenges, they still eventually completed the work needed to finish their doctorate. Motivation gave them the ability to see beyond their current challenging situation in order to persist so they could have opportunities for teaching and administrative positions, financial security, a sense of accomplishment, time to focus on their children after degree completion, and have no regret.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

All studies have limitations. Those limitations provide an opportunity for further research and inquiry of a problem or topic. The most noticeable limitation of this study is the small sample size of nine participants. Another limitation of the study is that the participants came from one university and were students in only four academic departments: Education, English, Political Science, and Sociology. There was no representation from the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, or Mathematics (STEAM) departments. Participation of graduate student mothers, particularly in the sciences, would have enhanced this study because of the different nature of study due to the time required for labs and experimentation demands placed upon students.

Recruiting participants for the study was far more difficult than expected. Snowball sampling yielded slow results, and I was able to identify only nine women who met both parameters of the study and were willing to participate. It took seven months to gather nine participants. Not all stages of Tinto's doctoral student persistence were equally represented by the participants. One student, Eva, was in Tinto's first stage of doctoral study as she was completing her first year of doctoral courses. Victoria and Kate were in the later phases of the second stage as they were drafting their prospectus or dissertation proposal. Six women were in

the final stage, with one of those six having already defended her dissertation. Eight of the nine participants were no longer taking weekly classes and, therefore, not regularly visiting campus, meeting with their advisors, other professors, or graduate students. Many commented that they did not have new stories or experiences to share monthly and suggested that I follow-up less frequently. Between the slow rate of gathering participants and their more minimal interactions with advisors, professors, and other students, the schedule for collecting data needed to be modified.

Participants expressed concerns about remaining anonymous because of the interconnectedness of those working in higher education as professors and administrators. It is a small community, and they were concerned about experiencing repercussions should anyone be able to identify them from this dissertation. Some details about race, culture, and families were not included. In some instances, that information would have provided a more full and rich description of the participants, yet also make them more identifiable. It was necessary to omit this information to help alleviate some concerns of the participants.

Conducting research on students from the university where I was a student and employee allowed me to have knowledge of the institution, personnel, and services that were provided. In retrospect though, I should have conducted this study with students at a university other than the one where I attended and was employed. I shared a mutual friend or colleague with each participant. For some participants, this may have provided a comfort level because they were speaking with someone who shared a mutual friend or colleague. For others, though, it may have been a concern. Occasionally, I would see participants on campus and always followed their lead. If they wanted to chat, I did. If they just waved, I waved back. If a colleague asked how I knew the participant, my response was always, "I've been here forever. I know

everybody." Conducting this research with participants from a university where I did not have a personal connection or was not present on campus every day would have alleviated the awkward moments.

In the future, I would not conduct snowball sampling to gather participants. If researching at one university, I would reach out to the Graduate Student Association and request assistance in sending emails and social media messages to students. Otherwise, if the research project were not university-specific, I would post messages on various social media networking groups and gather participants through those boards.

In addition to limitations, I have some recommendations for further research. A larger group of participants across the disciplines would add to the literature on student work-life balance and motivation to persist while managing the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood. Students pursuing doctorates across the disciplines would provide insight into the similarities and differences in student experience seeking work-life balance for those in STEAM disciplines that were not captured in this study. Additionally, I have often wondered the degree to which eight of the nine participants being in the prospectus, proposal or dissertation stage of their degree played in all nine participants completing their degrees. Had I gathered nine different doctoral student mothers from acceptance to a doctoral program and conducted a longitudinal study of their experiences, would all participants have completed their degree? A longitudinal study of doctoral student mothers from program acceptance through graduation or withdrawal from the university could provide substantial data into achieving balance, managing conflict, and motivation over the course of a student's academic journey.

Additional research is needed to inform practices that support student mothers obtaining degrees at all levels. Women receive a majority of undergraduate and graduate degrees across the

disciplines. There are approximately 2.7 million mothers with dependent children pursuing an undergraduate degree (Cruse, Holtzman, Gault, Croom, & Polk, 2019). It would be advantageous to learn the similarities and differences in the strategies to achieve balance and conflicts experienced when managing their different roles, motivation to persist, and overall student experience of both undergraduate and graduate students.

Many participants reported the emotional support of and the ability to delegate childcare and home responsibilities to their spouse or partner as a means of finding balance. Not all student parents have partners. 1.7 million undergraduate student mothers are single (Cruse et al., 2019). It would be beneficial to investigate the support mechanisms and coping strategies of single mothers who are pursuing degrees at all levels.

I would be remiss not to address that the study participants were all women and there is little research in the pursuit of a degree at any level on men who are fathers. How do student fathers manage and balance the responsibilities of school, work, and parenting? How do their experiences and strategies compare to those of student mothers? Lastly, populations of low-income, immigrant, international, cultural, or ethnic minority, and LGBTQ+ mothers are often omitted in research on motherhood. Focusing research on these mothers would provide new knowledge and important perspectives on the intersectionality of race, class, sexuality, with motherhood.

Although the findings were not representative of all doctoral student mothers at other universities, or even at Mid-Atlantic State University, this dissertation provides a glimpse into how doctoral student mothers manage and balance the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood.

Implications for Practice

What can an understanding of the experiences of mothers of young children who pursue doctoral degrees contribute to educational practice and policy? Drawing upon the evidence, there are four matters that contribute to educational practice and policy: expanded, affordable childcare; professional development; student connections; and creating a family-friendly campus.

Expanded and Affordable Childcare

The first recommendation is to expand options for on-campus childcare. Students reported concerns with the affordability, reliability, and quality of childcare providers which caused them to rely on family members to care for the child, spouses to arrange their employment to work-from-home and provide care, find alternate affordable care centers, and take loans to cover childcare expenses. Currently, the childcare centers at Mid-Atlantic State University are open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and require full-time enrollment. Courses are held on campus from 8:10 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. on weekdays, and some programs have classes on Saturdays. The university should conduct a comprehensive survey on childcare needs and investigate weekday and weekend hours needed for childcare and price point. Data from this should be used to alter center hours, cost, and create new part-time or flexible hour packages. Grants could provide financial support on a sliding scale for students with the greatest need.

Professional Development

The second recommendation is to provide faculty and staff with professional development that addresses creating an inclusive climate for student mothers. Workshops could be taught by human resource staff about medical leave accommodations afforded students. Faculty members who have been identified as standout mentors and role models could provide workshops on proven strategies for supporting student mothers to be successful students.

Student Connections

Creating opportunities for purposeful connections between student parents is the third recommendation. There is a student organization for students with children and started by undergraduate students. Expansions of that organization or creation of a second organization that focuses on the needs of graduate student mothers would provide students with children a community with members who understand the multiple responsibilities they are balancing as a student. An expanded organization would provide students with support and interaction with peers and provide an opportunity for mentoring and role modeling for undergraduate student parents by graduate student mothers.

Family-Friendly Campus

Mid-Atlantic State University's campus is open to university faculty, staff, students, guests, and the public as it is a state university. There are three public lactation spaces across 2,685 acres spanning five campuses over two townships. Although there are child changing stations in the restrooms at the football stadium, basketball arena, and outdoor sports fields for patrons of Division I athletics, there are no child-changing stations at student centers and recreation centers that are open to the public for event rentals, pool memberships, and swim lessons. Children are welcome in campus libraries provided they are supervised by their parent and one library provides a coloring book and crayons for children who visit. At a minimum, there should be public lactation spaces and child changing stations at all campus libraries, student centers, and recreation centers and coloring books and crayons for children available at all libraries.

Conclusion

The achievements of the participants in this study show that it is possible to be a graduate student mother who finds a reasonable balance and manages conflict among the responsibilities of school, work, and motherhood while completing a doctoral degree. Prioritization of one's goals, supportive partners and family members, and encouraging role models help; however, financial constraints, family members with different cultural expectations, and lagging structural support from universities may cause challenges and hiccups along the way. The sheer determination to complete their degree, be a role model for their children, and achieve the career they desired encouraged the women in my study to persist.

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Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Message

To: Graduate Student Mothers
From: Cara M. Macaluso
Subject: Seeking Participants for a Paid Research Study
Dear [First Name],

Your name was suggested to me by _____ (insert name). I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. I am researching experiences of graduate student mothers at Rutgers University on student retention, supports and constraints of graduate student mothers, and motivation for pursuing a doctoral degree and motherhood concurrently. I am inviting you to participate in my dissertation study focusing on this topic.

I invite you to complete a brief questionnaire below that asks you some questions to learn more about you and determine if you are eligible to participate. This questionnaire is confidential; only I will have access to your name, email address, and information you provide.

Do you have children? What are their ages?
Are you currently a doctoral student?
What date did you begin your pursuit of a research doctorate/when did you graduate?
What is your field of study?
Are you willing to be interviewed for my dissertations study? It will involve one to three 90-minute interviews in summer or fall-2014 with follow-up phone calls or emails during the fall semester. In appreciation for your participation, I will give you $50.00 in cash when the interviews and follow-up conversations have concluded. If you are selected to be interviewed, I will ask questions about your experiences about retention as a graduate student mother at Rutgers University, supports and constraints of graduate student mothers, and motivation for concurrently pursuing motherhood and a doctoral degree.

Please respond by (insert date). Thank you again for your interest.

Your participation is appreciated and important to the success of this research study. If you have questions about this study, please contact me (caramac@echo.rutgers.edu) or my advisor Tanja Carmel Sargent (tanja.sargent@gse.rutgers.edu)

Sincerely,

Cara

Cara M. Macaluso
Ed. D. Candidate, Education Theory, Policy & Administration, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Email: caramac@echo.rutgers.edu
Phone: 848-932-7442

Appendix B

Consent Form

Project Title: Retention, Motherhood, and the Pursuit of a Research Doctorate

Purpose of the Study: This research is being conducted by Cara M. Macaluso, a doctoral candidate in the department of Educational Theory Policy & Administration in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. I am inviting you to participate in this this research project because you are/have recently been a graduate student and mother pursuing a research doctorate. The purpose of this study is to examine retention and experiences of doctoral student mothers at Rutgers University under the guidance of Tanja Sargent.

Procedures: The procedure involves one to three individual interviews each approximately 90 minutes and monthly follow-up phone conversations or emails. The interviews and conversations will take place in late-summer and fall 2014. The total time for your participation will be 2 - 5 hours. All interviews will take place at a time and private location convenient for you. In appreciation for your participation, you will receive $50.00 cash when all the interviews and follow-up conversations have concluded

Potential Risks and Discomfort: There are no known risks associated with participating in this research study.

Potential Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you, but I hope that in the future other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the experiences of graduate student mothers and have a positive effect on educational policy and practice.

Confidentiality: All data gathered, as part of the study will be treated with strict confidence. Your name will not be revealed and any information your share will be confidential. All electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer and all hard copy materials will be secured in my home office. Your name will not be included on any collected data and a pseudonym will be used in its place. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. The data collected will be retained for three years following the closing of the protocol and then destroyed. All information collected on the participants not selected for the study will be destroyed.

Right to Withdrawal and Questions: Your participation in this research project is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator, Cara M. Macaluso at caramac@echo.rutgers.edu or 848-932-7442 or Tanja Sargent at tanja.sargent@gse.rutgers.edu or 848-932-0732.

Participants Rights: If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Rutgers University: Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Office of Research and Sponsored Programs; 3 Rutgers Plaza New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559; phone: 838-932-4058; fax: 517-432-4503; email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu.
Statement of Consent: Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in their research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

Study Participant _____ Date _____

Study Researcher Cara M. Macaluso _____ Date _____

With your permission, your interview will be audio-recorded, which allows the interviewer to listen carefully and keep accurate records. The audio files are kept confidential. Sign below if you agree to have the interviews audio-recorded.

Study Participant _____ Date _____

Contact Information:
Cara M. Macaluso, Graduate Student, Graduate School of Education
Rutgers. The State University of New Jersey
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Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. I'm Cara Macaluso, a graduate student and mother looking to learn about your experiences as a graduate student and mother at Rutgers University and how they affect student retention. I am recording this interview so I can collect everything we speak about and transcribe our conversation later. This should take about 90 minutes, but we can meet again if necessary. Please let me know if at any point you have any questions or need clarification. People like to tell stories and anecdotes about their lives – I would appreciate you telling me stories that add to your answers to these questions.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your relationship status?
3. How any children do you have and what are their ages?
4. What is your employment status?
5. How many semesters have you been attending graduate school?
6. Why did you decide to enroll in a doctoral program?
7. What are your goals related to achieving a doctorate?

Motherhood

1. How did you decide to pursue a doctorate and motherhood at the same time?
2. Did you receive any advice or criticism about pursuing a doctorate and motherhood? Do you have friends or acquaintances that are also doing this? What advice do you give them?
3. What do you enjoy most about pursuing motherhood and doctoral studies? What are you most afraid of? What do you find most challenging?

Family and Childcare

1. Do you feel supported by your partner/spouse/family?
2. Does family influence decisions about your education, career decisions, or family planning?

Financial concerns

1. Both doctoral study and children are expensive. What concerns, if any, do you have about finances?

Work-family balance

1. What struggles/challenges do you have managing family and doctoral study? How do you prioritize the different areas of your life?
2. When there is conflict with family and school needs, how do you solve the conflict?
3. How have you solved the work-family dilemma?

Institutional issues

1. What are the academic requirements for your doctorate?
2. How long do you anticipate it will take you to complete the program?
3. Are you challenged by any of the requirements?
4. Do you know other mothers pursuing doctorates? If so, what is your relationship with them?

Faculty and advisors

1. Tell me about your advisor. What is your relationship like? Is gender a factor in your relationship?
2. Do you feel supported by the faculty?
3. Do you have any role models or mentors at the university? How have they influenced your academic career? How have they influenced your future career decisions? What advice do they give you?
4. Are women represented in the faculty? Are they mothers?
5. If anything, what do you want from faculty or your advisor that you aren't getting?

Motivation

1. Has your motivation changed since having children/children got older? How?
2. What motivates you to persist?
3. Do you ever consider leaving the program?
4. If you could go back, would pursue a doctorate and motherhood at the same time? Would you do it differently?

Conclusion

- We've discussed a number of things. Can you think of any other issues that are important to your experience as a mother pursuing a research doctorate?
- What advice would you give to a mother of young children who wanted to pursue a doctorate or to a doctoral student who was considering motherhood?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your experiences. I will be in touch with you in a month to check-in.