Professor Mom:
Surviving the World of Academia and Motherhood

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Bio:

Born and raised in Richardson, Texas, Stephanie Lewis is a rising senior currently attending Fisk University. After changing schools three times post-high school graduation in 2004, she finally found her home at one of the prestigious Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Upon acceptance to the McNair program at Fisk, she began to aspire to attaining a Master's in nursing and a Ph.D. in marriage and family counseling. Stephanie's research interests include physical, sexual, and verbal abuse among African American youth, rape and severe trauma coping strategies, understanding the media's effect of social gender roles and language, holistic health, and the changing conceptualization of motherhood. Her college years have included playing collegiate basketball and volleyball, involvement with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) as well as acceptance into the Phi Theta Kappa (National Junior College Honor Society), and multiple Dean's Lists.

Abstract:

The world of collegiate education, until recently, has seen few female faculty members. More rarely, due to the gender role women play in society – female faculty members with children are also vaguely evident and seemingly nonexistent in the eyes of college students. This research seeks to delve into the lives and histories of mothers who teach in local North Texas colleges and universities. Eight women responded via 17 open-ended questions about their family background, academic achievement, children, support systems, and institutional issues. Results demonstrate a wide variety of life pathways, with no specific or constructed plan of action. Although analysis is preliminary, it is a springboard for future research in current institutional policies about men and women with children who work as collegiate faculty.

Introduction

To whom much is given, much is required. Physically, women have the capability to bear children. They are trained socially to be the first line of care and guardianship over children (Rapoport and Rapoport 1971). Often seen as a "man's job," professorship has historically established itself in the patriarchal mentality; women are sometimes thought to be only for the home, and men are for the real world (Papanek 1973). Women have been poorly represented numerically when looking at faculty in higher level education (MIT Faculty Newsletter 1999). In reuniting the woman to her voice, the following literature review and analysis brings insight to the social forces, obstacles, and facilitators to women who have accepted their role as mothers as well as who have defied the social restrictions many persons place on women with children (Anders 2004). Hearing their stories demonstrates the ambition of ordinary women with extraordinary goals. With sundry academic pathways, these women display resistance discouragement, personal determination, withstanding situational impediments, and times of unanticipated success. I hope this research brings to light the doors of possibility for women who want to pursue a graduate level degree (master's or Ph.D.) and have a family.

Context of Work

Her Story

Starting at a young age, girls and boys are taught and socialized to fit into a specific gender role when it comes to choosing a career (Stroeher 1994). Even small children draw themselves in traditional male and female careers, as they mirror the things they feel they are capable of becoming one day (Stroeher 1994). Fifteen to thirty-five years, a husband, and a few children later, women are served with many expectations as mothers. Hanna Papanek describes this occurrence as the two-person career: women professionals who are married to men who are

also professionals (1973). Papanek notes the "stereotype of the wife as the supporter, comforter, backstage manager, home maintainer, and main rearer of children" (835). Here, a social dilemma is presented: women are often expected and socialized to play a certain role in society, but are also distanced from validation in any other role that would empower and stimulate their intellectual ability in traditionally male-dominated realms (West and Zimmerman 1987; see also Wilson 2004).

The woman can experience what W. E. B. DuBois calls a double-conscious – one has social expectations and roles to play, but also holds personal desires to learn and contribute to society in ways not typically facilitated by those social roles and expectations (DuBois 1904). Patricia Hill Collins calls for a new level of individual consciousness where one is aware and verbal about one's own life story (1990; see also Lorde 1978). She recognizes the beauty and importance in the sundry life experiences of many cultural groups (1990). Although her work specifically focuses on the awareness of black women, she donates a breath of fresh air to the often hushed and misperceived stories of women, and the additional attempt for those stories and experiences to be viewed as valid in the formulation of theory and in contributing to the larger body of academic knowledge about society (1990). In validating the experiences of women, and recognizing their ability to help explain society via subjectivity, Collins hopes to empower women in realms where they have been often viewed and studied as the "other," as well as bring into question the traditional European epistemologies (1990; see also Denzin and Lincoln 2006). With this backdrop, one must also understand the climate of the academic environment women choose to enter and thrive.

The Institution

In connecting the woman's role as it relates to society as a whole, this research hones in on women who have fully engaged in a specific biological privilege and function of their socially characterized womanhood – becoming a mother – but who have also dedicated a large amount of their life via time and energy toward a career in academia. Here one comes face to face with the demographic makeup of a higher level education. In the *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, the female faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology initiated a dose of reality to the concurrent colleagues. The women bring to light the disproportionate number of male to female professors as compared to the number of male to female undergraduate students. Not only this, but the study specifically set forth realistic objectives and means for improvement of not only the lack of the physical presence of faculty, but also attempts to address some of the perceptions about women. The concluding remarks included suggestions for improvement in regards to motherhood:

> Make the policy on maternity leave and tenure clock uniform throughout the Institute, and make the policies widely known so that they become routine. Take steps to change the presumption that women who have children cannot achieve equally with men or with women who do not have children. [15]

The study helped set my undergraduate mind into the minds of faculty in research-oriented institutions. It is in this environment I hope to explore the women and their stories.

Approaching the disparity of female professors seems only to envision half the problem. Once females attain a position in their respective educational departments, the road to receiving tenure is another journey all within itself. Marcia L. Bellas notes the differences between the types of activities both men and women spend time in as professors. She gains perspective from Arlie Hochschild's book, *The Managed Heart* (1983). Hochschild notes the types of jobs that

require emotional labor, and how women have a greater likelihood of being involved in those occupations then men. From Hochschild, Bellas defines emotional labor as involving "…face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public; require[ing] that workers produce an emotional state in another person; and allow employers to control (at least to some extent) the emotional activities of workers" (Bellas 1999:96). Hochschild categorizes professors as having to perform emotional labor, and Bellas attributes certain levels of emotional labor to the four types of activities in which professors engage: teaching, service, research, and administration (Hochschild 1983; Bellas 1999). It is noted that there are gendered differences in time allocation: men were more likely then women to spend a larger piece of their time in research and administration, and women are more likely than men to participate in teaching and service. Of course this is not true for every person, but there is a pattern in the academic culture of typically rewarding those who do research and publish and bring a much desired prestige to the school (Bellas 1999). Women faculty must still grapple with the academic means of success and achievement in their field.

The Student

Herein lies the crux of the matter. The student's visibility and relation brings to light some structural patterns that personify gender roles. In elementary school, a child sees that women are a majority of the teachers, rarely if ever having a male instructor in the classroom. Through middle school and high school, this pattern persists, with a few more male teachers as the grade in school increases. And finally, at the collegiate level, one meets the doors of the college and university to find where all of the male teachers have been all along. Here, not seeing a prevalence of males in elementary education, and noticing low levels of women in higher education denotes a socially institutionalized gender expectation. Ten toes on the ground,

the professor who is a mother is also a nonexistent entity to the average student. Higher education resembles a system where policy and innovative research can be conducted and can affect public policies. Research-focused educational institutions still lag behind in their placement, retention, and support of female faculty (Wilson 2004). This realm of power seems to be for the men, but why? Why are there no women there for the female graduate students to seek mentorship from? How can that student feel like she belongs in an often masculine-seeming profession? Here is where gender is one of the tools to keep some out and some in the world of academia (Anders 2004).

Sari van Anders reports female graduate students are most likely to "self-select" themselves out for continuing to pursue an academic career (2004). Although men were more likely to want to have children, Anders finds that women were more likely to *not* pursue teaching because of barriers like parenting and mobility (2004). Here we see that women perceive their role as a mother would not allow or make it harder for them to pursue being a professor, more so than the men who do not see fatherhood as a primary hindrance (Anders 2004). This perpetuates the stereotypical gender roles placed on women to be the keepers of the home, and to pursue careers that will not interfere with that desired and often expected status (Papanek 1973). It is in this context that I hope to implement and articulate a closer look into the lives of women whose role as mothers may sometimes seem hushed and rarely talked about to the average student, or in the average classroom. From this study, I desire to familiarize the female undergraduate with a sense of optimism and determination to fulfill their career goals despite the gender roles some men, women, and parents alike tend to place on mothers.

Data Collection

Sample

Subjects were recruited by contacting the local North Texas colleges and universities. Participants (N = 8) for this report were current professors, or had previous teaching experience in higher level (collegiate) institutions (n = 3, 1 = public, 2 = private). Two other graduate students with children were also interviewed, but not included in the results and discussion for this particular paper. All participants are women and mothers of children. The sample includes mothers who have had children themselves, adopted, or who held the capacity of legal guardians from their spouse's previous relationship. The average age of participants is 49.124 (min = 35, max = 65). Please see Table 1 for more statistical information. Professors were contacted from the program-sponsoring school, and from the sponsoring anthropology department. The department has 16 anthropologists (9 female, 7 male). National Science Foundation Program sponsors also gave numbers to other contacts. Interviewees were recruited via the snowball method. Other four-year and some two-year colleges and universities were also contacted, but responses from two-year colleges were fruitless. From each school, the department secretary was asked which of their female faculty members had children. From this basic set of names, each qualifying teacher was contacted. All teachers who responded were included in the study. Each participant was offered a $5.00 beverage shop gift card for their participation.

Research Methods

> *What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say?*
>
> *What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to*
>
> *make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in*
>
> *silence?* [Lorde 1978:41]

In retrospect of prevalent voices in the writing of America's history, I hope to break the silence of women in academia who have children and feel like they cannot combine the joy of motherhood with the delight of turning personal desires into an actual career. For the students who never felt they could continue in their academic work as well as provide for their children, this research functions to give eyes to see the lives and ears to hear the stories of a few extraordinary women. To investigate the lives and begin an initial understanding of the world of professorship, qualitative data will be used. The authors of *The Ethnographer's Toolkit* explain in-depth, open-ended interviewing as an avenue "…to explore domains believed to be important to the study and about which little is known" (1999:121). It is from the point of view of each professor I plan to document their own journey in balancing academia and family life. Statistics and numerical comparisons can only say so much about a certain population, and for this particular population – mothers who are professors – hardly any statistical data can be found on a national scale. It is through the lens of qualitative research that one can see limitations of a statistical data and analysis that cannot give insight into the daily lives and experiences of its population (Denzin and Lincoln 2006).

Gleaming among the personal lives of a statistically unmeasured group of people, qualitative methods are the meat of this particular research. In-depth qualitative interviews lasting 55 minutes to 2 hours focused on 16 basic questions with about 2-6 probes per question each. All those who could not physically meet for a face-to-face interview had the opportunity to answer all of the questions via e-mail. Two of the four participants who responded via e-mail were available for a follow-up interview. All face-to-face interviews took place in the professor's personal office. Questions asked covered four basic subjects: personal academic achievements, children management, partner support, and institutional tendencies. Personal academic questions

included motivations for perusal of a degree, years of attainment, and inhibitors and motivators for continuing education, as well as the presence of professors with children in their graduate schools. Questions directed at how children came into the picture focused on how they were managed between partners, and during times of employment. In asking about partner support, the occupations, academic encouragement, and educational levels of partners were attained. Institutional tendency questions lastly asked about the work environment for mothers, and how motherhood and work specifically intersected. Basic responses of age, race/ethnicity identified with, parents' educational level, and place of childhood were also recorded. Each participant was also asked to give a copy of their curriculum vitae (CV) for clarification on dates of graduation. Most professors had their CV posted online from their respective schools of employment.

Results

In reporting preliminary analysis, broad generalizations about every person cannot be made without recognizing the diversity of all responses. No one person completed his or her degree in the same area, timeframe, or way as the others. Some had spousal support, but no in-law support, some had their own children, whereas one respondent adopted. The virtue of diversity in responses show how any situation one is placed in can be used as a stepping stone to higher grounds of character building, achievement, and success if one takes the resources they have, or can attain, to get the job done. On a macro level, patterns are noted in five specific areas: agency (personal abilities and disabilities), chronological sequence of educational attainment, spousal presence (support/lack of support), children's issues, and other moral support (found in work and nonwork environments). Much of the women's anecdotes and comments are also placed in the results, which makes for a lengthy read, but the goal is to invite insight and give a voice to the women who responded. For demographics of participants, see Table 1.

Agency

Some women confessed their feelings of incapability to complete a graduate degree, or even adjust to the rigors of undergraduate work. Even in graduate school, one woman reported her unanticipated and oversaturated emphasis on theory, but found that once she began actually getting into her practice (school counselor), it rekindled her initial passion for attending graduate school. This woman also spent her postbaccalaureate period really researching what she wanted to do for a career she would appreciate. Despite her biological hearing defect, another professor in counseling and nursing also overcame the discouraging words of professors to soon attain two degrees. Although she earned two Ph.D.s, she mentions her initial feelings about herself and the world of graduate school:

> I [was] not ever thinking about grad school, in the first place I am very shy, and not very competent, and I don't think I can write a thesis, and I would always think it was just some magical project that was way above my ability. [Interview 2]

Another woman who attained her degree later in life tells of how she had always been a reader since a young age, and seemed to feel misplaced as a thinking woman:

> And all that time I wasn't working, I didn't do anything except read my head off, and [laughs] looking at people and listening and watching, and it's amazing in how just…in that time, gosh [the] 70s…the attitude of men toward women, back then was that women were really stupid, and I can remember talking to people, especially as [my husband] was in the retiring process, and beginning to job hunt…these people that he wanted to perhaps work for [laughed], were just, *so amazed that I could put two words together*, you know…The big time microfiche days, that they were putting everything onto microfiche…it was a big old clunky thing that you could read documents on in the

library, but back then it was cutting edge, and I know one time we were talking, and I told some guy [who mentioned the use of microfiche], well, if you do it that way, that it's going to give you problems indexing," and […] his jaw hit the floor, that I could just, listen to him just talk about this…idea, and tell him what the problem [is] [laughs], goodness!, I am in the wrong place, with the wrong people. [Interview 1, emphasis added]

Three of the four self-identified African Americans also mentioned discrimination or racism as parts of obstacles experienced in pursuing a doctorate degree:

I was told (by more advanced students in the Doctoral Program) that I knew more than I should, and in classes my professors would see me as a threat, and I would never graduate. I was also told that it had been 15 years since an African American had graduated from the program I entered, and that I would not finish. [Interview 10]

My mother and aunt both had Ph.D.s. Several friends of my mother also had Ph.D.s; they were my role models. They made it seem commonplace. It was not until I left my African American environment in Baton Rouge that I learned that my people were not expected to achieve great things. [Interview 9]

One self-identified African American also listed the following obstacles in going to graduate school: "Being young, low expectations from faculty, lack of exposure to prejudice, and prejudice" (Interview 9). Similar answers were unfound in any of the Caucasian respondents when asked the same question. Women who reported some form of racial discrimination were over the age of 40, and also had parents who had postbaccalaureate degrees. Only two main ethnic groups were used for the study, and other ethnicities should also be examined for the presence of discrimination for future research.

In regards to family backgrounds, some women had parents who had not gone past a baccalaureate degree education. There was no one pattern of parent education as a determining factor for doctorate degree achievement, but a majority of the African American respondents said that their parents had Ph.D.s, or postbaccalaureate degrees. This didn't occur as often for the other Caucasian or white self-identified participants. Parent educational resilience is seen in the African American respondents at their mid-40s and older. This may demonstrate the lack of opportunity for women of color historically and geographically who didn't have formally educated parents, but no sure conclusions can be made. Further research may be fruitful in determining differences of parentage and geographical location for a variety of ethnic and historical backgrounds in mothers who are professors. It may also give insight into the nature of school systems, as well as the familial tendencies and expectations dependent on one's culture and class.

It is also noticed that women had to negotiate their own working patterns while pregnant or during their child's infancy, as well as create and define their own role in the workplace if there was not one exactly made for them.

> If I had advice, what I would tell somebody who was just starting, Don't give up, is one thing, and if it's going to work, it's going to work, and things will fall into place for you, but it might come about in odd ways. It might not be what you expect, and you will also have to be prepared to sometimes fabricate your own job. And make your own job in a place. [Interview 1]

Two mothers mentioned how they had to explain and mediate their own responsibilities for teaching and work as they had to care for their newborn child. They had to come to an agreement to work only for a specific period of time, while being considerate of other faculty as well as

their students. Those participants who worked outside of academia for a period of their life also mentioned how they had created for themselves a job with their respective careers and work responsibilities.

When asked about their desires for having children, the answer varied with every person. Some felt like it was culturally expected to have children; others were pushed by their parents to be more academically, whereas others remember having no particular desire to have children. This demonstrates again the wide variety of temperaments and personal histories of each respondent.

Chronological Sequence of Educational Attainment

Respondents averaged 10.9 years from graduating with their bachelor's degrees to graduating with their Ph.D.s. Half of the respondents had children while in graduate school. This half include women who started graduate school when their children started college, women who had child in undergraduate school, women who gave birth after passing a Ph.D. comprehensive exam, as well as a woman who was working on her first Ph.D. as her son was a child. Being pregnant in an academic program was also mentioned as an obstacle by one of the e-mail respondents. The other half of the participants had their first child after they had attained all of their degrees, and began working. Although some received their master's and then Ph.D. at two different schools, others attended programs that took them straight through a master's to a Ph.D. Financial burdens to pay for college were also mentioned, and seen as a barrier to completing composition of a final dissertation.

One of the respondents over age 60 mentioned a particular national event as affecting the type of educational push her high school implemented:

When the Russians set up that sputnik in 1967 that scared the heck out of the high

schools all over, everybody in the U.S. thought, O my god, the Russians sent something

up in orbit, and we haven't and that they are so far ahead of us, and it changed the way

education was done in our schools. And we didn't have advanced placement classes until

then. Then all of a sudden, everybody got slammed into accelerated classes like you can't

believe. [Interview 1]

Many of the respondents felt like pursuing an academic career was a means of pursuing what

they wanted to do with their life, and a part of following their own personal aspirations. Three of

the respondents found themselves in postbaccalaureate, master's, and even Ph.D. careers that

didn't bring them satisfaction. This, along with opportunities to peruse another degree made it

possible for them to truly tap into a career that better fit their newfound interests:

I was a bit bored with my job as a Computer Analyst, and I was seeking a new challenge.

When I was approached with the offer of a Patricia Roberts Harris Fellowship, I accepted

quickly and easily. [Interview 10]

Despite the unpleasant situations one professor had with her delinquent child, she felt like

education was a source of stability:

But I guess my educational stuff has been my salvation in terms of my sanity, something

positive to focus my brain on, when some other things fall apart. [Interview 2]

All participants mentioned their education as filling their insatiable thirst for knowledge. As

undergrads, attending graduate school was not always planned, but each subject was able to

eventually find her niche. The respondent with two Ph.D.s mentioned her present satisfaction in

her career as a teacher:

…to think about the fact that you catch lives, people who have better abilities than you do, you can impact them for the best, and they can go out and do better work than you have ever done, and there are so many of them, and so you touch so many different nurses and counselors, and I can go to bed at night, if nothing ever happened beyond this point, and say it was good, I enjoyed the trip. [Interview 2]

She realized that despite her past time spent in the nursing field, she was able to combine all of her past experience with that career field and use it as a marriage and family counselor. This theme remained through the many respondents, in that women's many experiences – although sometimes not directly connected – often helped later in life.

Spousal Support

All women, except for one, noted that their spouses supported their academic pursuits. This support came financially, emotionally, and empathetically. Two of the eight women simultaneously attended graduate school with their spouse, and seven also noted that they had spouses who had a graduate-level degree, or a formal, career-centered training certificate. Those who said their spouse was in graduate school noted a mutual understanding between husband and wife of the rigors of completing assignments while in school, as well as having to finish deadlines while working as faculty. The two women in this category not only attended graduate school at the same time, but also studied the same subject (biology = 1, anthropology = 1). In concerns of times of marriage relative to academic milestones, answers varied from before undergraduate school, while in graduate school, and after graduation with a Ph.D. One woman married right out of high school, whereas others married in their late and early twenties, and early thirties.

Financial stability also seemed to be a determining factor when women decided to have children. The professor who went through undergraduate school as a single mother noted that while in school, she had to keep three jobs. She mentioned that her former husband donated a hundred dollars a month for child support, but she had to carry the burden of financial provisions and childcare while she was at work and school. This respondent remarried while she and her current husband were in graduate school. Many professors had to take out student loans and reported needing additional energy, time, and money in completing their dissertations. Lack of monetary consistency kept one woman and her husband from starting a family:

Did [I] envision [my]self as having children and a Ph.D., and Master's? Yes. Which one came first as most possible to achieve? For me it was never a question of achieving or not achieving one of them, I always knew that I would have both, it was just more of a question of timing and finances. We needed to at least have jobs. When you're in graduate school, you are so poor, you are lucky if you are living on ten thousand dollars a year, and that was for us because we were both in graduate school. And I knew one, a girlfriend, where she was in graduate school, but her husband was not, and so she had the resources, so that she did not feel as much poverty as we did. And she did have a child when she was in graduate school, and it'd be hard, but she had the financial backing of her spouse who was working. So there are some people like that, But [my husband] and I were both in graduate school, and we both needed to, we were pretty focused on getting our degree, and finishing that stage, and then getting a job, and we felt like we needed to have an income before we could ever even support a family, and it was never a question of if, or which one was more possible but more of when. And there is never a good time,

really to have a kid, but we just felt like we needed to be a little more financially secure.

We thought it would be good to have a job and be working. [Interview 3]

Although financial support seemed to be necessary, a spouse that shared household responsibilities and parenting activities also was mentioned as being integral to balancing work and family.

The one respondent who married a man with a fifth-grade education noted that although her husband didn't fully understand why she had to work so long and hard for her Ph.D., he still made efforts to keep their child entertained while she worked on her dissertation. Their relationship initiated on a church prison ministry trip. Her husband was an ex-inmate who converted to Christianity and began to work as an evangelist in talking to other prisoners about Christ. Marrying at a late age in life, she mentions the large amount of love she had bottled up, and ready to give to him. Although his particular career wasn't similar to her's, they connected through their religious beliefs and desire to help people:

> And a lot of people changed [from my husband's halfway house work], and he made a big impact, because he was what you called a three-time loser. He had been in at least three times, for most of his adult life – in prison. And his interesting testimony was, "What the state of California couldn't do for you and thousands of dollars, Jesus did it in a moment for free" – that Jesus completely changed his life. He had a very interesting life, and during my nursing career, that was my thing, he didn't bother it, he was ok with it, if I needed to come out here [to the campus], and sometimes if I was stuck in a Bible study in the dorm one night… he would just stay with [our son], no problem, I didn't feel restricted in any way. [Interview 2]

His work schedule brought flexibility to watch after their child when daycare could not provide supervision. Women who had spouses who also worked as professors also had a level of flexibility in managing childcare and negotiating time of leave. One notes their balance of responsibilities in relation to parenting:

> I would say in terms of raising [our daughter], it's 50/50. We both do everything. We have sort of this well-oiled machine so sort of whatever needs to get done in the mornings before we go off to work, and off to school gets done, we don't have designated activities. If you're in the kitchen, and she needs milk, then you're the one who gets her milk. If you're in the bedroom, and she needs to get dressed, then you're the one who gets her dressed – it's just this constant movement of we are all three getting ready at the same time, and whoever happens to grab the shorts and put them on her. We don't have anything designated. If she is sick, it's whoever doesn't have an important meeting for that day. And often times if she is sick we will split the day, and we'll go in for half a day. And in some ways it's good, because if you know you only have a half a day to get done what you need to get done, then you cram it in, and you've finished. So sometimes that's more efficient. [Interview 3]

Another subject reported that the benefits of having a spouse also involved in academia were beneficial when it came to work-related assistance: "He helped read and edit my dissertation and later we were co-authors on publications" (Interview 7 – e-mailed response).

Some women experienced extra expectations as women, and they did not receive the support they needed from a spouse:

[My first husband] wanted me to stay home after I finished my BS so that I could start being a 'good mother.' I left 2 weeks after that comment. He was resentful of my education and drive. [Interview 5]

[My husband] was not particularly ever supportive in an academic way; he thought it was absolutely useless that I wanted to go back to school. He had several years of college, but had gotten out and joined the air force. Before, you had to have a college degree to be an officer. And so he thought it was stupid, every time I wanted to do this… my feelings for him were always, kind of catawampus…bent. I was really silly, because a lot of the things he said about barefoot and pregnant, I thought he was joking about, because I came from a family where women were allowed to have status, and to be intellectual, and to be partners, and it never really crossed my mind that anybody who is as smart as he was, would not feel the same way that my family had felt, so it was a big shock to find out that part of his life became dedicated to keeping me in my place, and keeping me off balance. [Interview 1]

I think men who come from traditional backgrounds of the roles of men and women find it difficult to break from those patterns, even if the wife is working to establish a full-time career in academics. In these cases, the wife is working all the time: both at work and then at home. [Interview 7]

Respondents showed a lack of support for women who careerwise had the same responsibilities as their spouse. One respondent, when asked what changes would be ideal that would make the lives of professors who are mothers easier, suggested:

Each female faculty member who is a mother would be assigned a "wife": someone who would do the cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, etc. In other words, the female faculty member who is a mother would have a "wife" to do all of the things a wife does for a male faculty member. This would equalize the workload, promotion and tenure process, etc. [Interview 7]

Some husbands felt like the woman's primary responsibility was keeping the home, and the level of familial sacrifice in relation to one's personal career leaned on the women to take off, or place aside their work duties for the chores and tasks they have at their dwelling place.

Child-Related Issues

Women had their children in varying stages in life, as seen in the section about educational attainment. External forms of childcare were utilized by all of the participants in the study. Many of the mothers actually rearranged their work schedule when their babies were in the newborn stage so that they would be able to stay home with their children. One professor stayed at home with her young children, and attended undergraduate and graduate school when her children were much older. On-campus childcare was mostly mentioned as an area of improvement for their respective institutions. One woman speaks to the complexity of selecting childcare for her toddler daughter, as well as her dissatisfaction with the university-sponsored preschool when asked about where her school could do better for mothers:

Childcare on campus. We don't have that, on-campus childcare would be nice. Even in an environment where you could go hang out with your child, to me, with our family, with our particular child, that would be more detrimental to her, if I sort of came and went in the middle of the day, I don't think that's fair to a small child. Now if a child was more like five, and can understand, 'Mom's gonna come have lunch with me today,' then

I think that would be really fun and great. But a two year old doesn't understand that sort of come-and-go, I just want to say hi to you. If I came to school, and hung out for 30 minutes, and left again, it would be that whole, 'you've left me again' and it doesn't traumatize her for us to leave her, but she's sad, and she doesn't want us to leave her, and I think she gets over it fairly quickly once we leave, and I don't want to put her through that multiple times during the day. So her, at her age, it's better for her to just stay at school, and not see me. So I can't say a daycare that sort of allows you to come and go would be good, it depends on your child, but for my child it would not be good. So it would not be any more beneficial than what we have now. It's just something on campus, we have a preschool. So here's the thing, there's an early childhood education on campus for preschool (I think you have to be three- to five years old), but it only works on the academic schedule, so when the university is out during Christmas, there is no daycare, and that's often the time where faculty need to catch up, and they *need* to come into the office and write a paper, in those four weeks, or they need to catch up on a project, and so if your child goes to the university preschool, well the preschool is closed during those four weeks, then you don't have any childcare. It's closed during the entire summer, so you don't have any childcare. So in that sense, a preschool on campus would need to operate more as a year-long daycare, rather than on a university schedule. It's open to students and faculty. There is a long waiting list. For me, that wouldn't be beneficial right now, because I need childcare when the school is closed. So it's hard even when her daycare is off on Labor Day. So an ideal daycare, a university daycare would be one that accepts newborns all the way up to kindergarten, all the year long, and didn't follow the academic calendar in terms of openings and closings. [Interview 3]

Many mothers want the best for their children when they are not able to be physically with them. One mother, when asked what would make a perfect school, reported that she would enjoy an on-campus childcare that would offer "even a pick-up service that would get children from school and safely transport them to a state-of-the- art, technology-savvy, after-school center where they would have a nutritious snack, explain what happened during their school day, do their homework, work with a tutor, and then participate in an enrichment activity – swimming, tennis, drawing, golf, crafts, or other sports activities" (Interview 10).

Mothers also demonstrated how they try their best to spend quality time with their children. Many make extra efforts to see their child's extracurricular activities whenever possible. One parent especially focuses on their child and family from the time she picks her up until she goes to bed:

And so from the time I pick her up…I don't do any work, work is put on the back burner, I focus on my family, I focus on her, we cook dinner, we play, we read stories, we have baths, because I only have until 8 o'clock, that's when she goes to bed, so between the hours of 4:30 and 8, most of my energy is focused on her. And then after she goes to bed, I go back to the computer, catch up on e-mails, read a little bit. I usually do more work in the evening, especially during the semester. [Interview 10]

Most professors did not mention having to bring their child into the workplace when it came to teaching classes. If a child was sick, usually some type of childcare was always available, or the other parent was able to take off work to watch the child. Women usually were responsible for taking off work to watch after a sick child, mostly after there was a level of negotiation between husband and wife. Only one professor mentioned how she would bring her young son to her Anatomy and Physiology class, and use him to help clean and organize child-

safe portions of lab equipment. Other professors kept their child somewhat separate from their office work environment. More research can be done in this area to explore ways that various disciplines can integrate children into the career.

Respondents showed a degree of malleability in working with children who were often a challenge. One mother mentioned her frustration with her older son as she moved to another area and her husband's death. Her son got involved in illegal activities, and was once arrested by the police. For that child's time period, she worked seven days a week, and did not have too much time to spend with her now older son, who usually had a father watching after him while he was home. Other issues with identity also came into play as the son seemed to search for his "Mexican" side of the family. Another mother also mentions her having to breastfeed everywhere she went for a month to keep her breast-milk flowing. She communicated feelings of awkwardness when trying to "pump" at work. One mother who was e-mailed mentioned challenges as a parent of a special needs child. If time permits, a follow-up interview will take place to better understand her specific challenges.

Other Support

Women were asked what types of support systems they also had at work, through family, and in any other community organizations.

School and work related. Women interviewed had a wide variety of work experiences that both hindered and facilitated their roles as mothers. One woman mentioned her previous faculty member as an example of how children could become a large help for her anthropology fieldwork experience:

And in terms of faculty members who had children, I had two really close faculty

members who had children. Both of them took their children all over the place with them,

they were models. Kids are portable, and if you are going to go into the field, take them with you, you know, they will run around with the other kids, wherever you are, they'll adapt. So I actually went into the field with one of my professors for six months, with her child, and so that was a really good role model for me… I was in graduate school, and she needed someone to come into the field with her, not necessarily to be a nanny, but to sort of co-parent, so I went into the field for six months, and I was her research assistant, and we sent the little boy, he was three, to school because in French Polynesia the kids start school when they were three years, it's kind of like a preschool. It's part of the school system. And so we would go off and do research during the day when he was at school, and then we would sort of co-parent him in the afternoon. So it was really good example of how flexible kids are and how, if you do bring them into your workplace how they can actually open the doors for you, and a lot of windows for you in terms of socializing with people, and getting to know people. Kids have this amazing ability to just cut through all the sort of shyness. Some of the social norms that are put in place for how to introduce yourself, and how to meet people, kids just kind of barge right in and have an innocence about them, that break down barriers that adults put up. [Interview 3]

This professor gave her insight into integrating children into work life. Her area of study made her involvement with her professor a movement forward with her academic career. Other respondents also mentioned their advisors at their respective undergraduate schools as a source of encouragement and direction in their search for specific academic direction. These professors ranged in abilities to bring out the interest from eager students, or simply recognized those students' personal talents and abilities:

I don't know what they picked up on, but they honed [my research skills], and sharpened those. I had some really good [male] mentors that had no reason to pay attention to a pretty quiet person that did not make straight A's…neither one of these men ever treated me like I was different because I was a female or because I was a mom. They took what some people would say as negatives, and instead of saying, "oh, she has too much on her plate" they would turn it around and say, 'boy, she can sure multi-task'… They never treated me like a girl. I was in a very man-dominated area [field biology]. [Interview 5]

Not all professors mentioned seeing their respective graduate school faculty members with children.

Nonschool related. Family was also mentioned by many of the respondents as supportive in both academic and personal lives. Family involvement included watching after children, financial support, as well as encouragement for continuing education. One professor mentioned how although her mother didn't fully understand many of the things she had to do for graduate school, she still supported her and understood that she was continuing her education to further her career. Most women who mentioned family as a large source of help and support also mentioned that their family also stayed close to them presently. The proximity to family members determined the amount of day-to-day support available. In describing her support system, one participant remembers an old saying:

It's just impossible to handle the myriad of responsibilities alone. The African proverb,

'…it takes a village [to raise a child]…' is absolutely correct. [Interview 10]

Including all of the areas of support mentioned, this village could consist of fellow graduate students, church members, family, maids, babysitter, public schools, and peers.

Church involvement and religion seemed to be a source of support for three of the four self-identified Africans Americans, and one of the four Caucasian/White/White American respondents. Church organizations helped with moral support and childcare, as well as basic on-the-job responsibilities:

I run the Children's Church at my church, and that has been so valuable, because I've gotten the teens to help on Sundays; they also help me at work. They are great at filing, shredding, cleaning my office, and helping me with general chores. [Interview 10]

Women who mentioned church involvement also mentioned support in terms of their faith in God to help them get through their often discouraging situations. These women showed an integration of family, church, and academic life:

It's hard, but it takes a great deal of planning, patience, and ability to truly multi-task. When my children were small, I didn't have extracurricular activities that my children could not participate in. I slept very little, often only able to sleep between midnight and 5 am. I denied myself many things for the sake of family and career. For the most part, I think the only way I made it through was with God's grace and plenty of prayer. [Interview 7]

My family is very forward, progressive, and productive. My parents are professionals who worked hard and taught their children respect for others, the value of knowledge, and the strength that comes from trusting in God. [Interview 10]

Faith in a higher power seemed to bring these women additional strength and support when it could not be found elsewhere.

Additional Findings

Almost all of the mothers were unaware of the specific rules and regulations for women who had children for their current institution. They were vaguely aware of the extra year or two they would receive on their tenure clock, and the well-known six weeks' paid leave available to pregnant women. Most knowledge of institutional allowances came from informal sources, depending on the level of family-friendliness experienced with their particular department. Women also demonstrated a level of consideration toward their fellow colleagues and students:

…in one sense your job is very flexible, but in another sense you still have a

commitment to your classes and your students, which is not flexible. [Interview 3]

Professors demonstrated a view of dedication and loyalty to their work, and how it affects others when they themselves decide to have children. Here, an additional pressure is placed on women to not only consider their spouse, but also their coworkers and other students. Future research can include understanding the specific school policies for mothers on faculty.

Conclusion

Just as each human's fingerprints fail to match that of another human's, the stories of the lives of each woman held unique twists and unexpected turns at different places in life, and for different reasons. I can relate to the vulnerable observer, pursuing knowledge on something seemingly missing in my own life (Behar 1996; see also Carspecken 1996). Entering this project I initially held personal goals of attending graduate school and earning a Ph.D. This aspiration has ostensibly initiated internal conflict with my lifelong desire to be a mother of many children. When I was younger, I would say that I would like to be a housewife and home-school my own children. Yet as the world of education began to show me the many career opportunities I could have, my wishes to be a housewife and stay at home declined. In this research, I have learned that being a mother is more than being there physically, but mentally and emotionally, and that

my own desires and career choices do not have to be limited to the fact that I have or want children. There is no concrete, set path to the perfect life, perfect spouse, or the perfect child. However, there are many avenues and career opportunities where I can implement my children into the learning process at the appropriate age.

In review, I am reminded of the words of Jesus: "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me" (Matthew 19:14). Children are valuable to society and shouldn't have to be seen as burdens, or an unwanted weight, but as a blessing, and a gift to the whole society as another mind that can contribute to the world. Instead of disconnecting children from a higher level of education, they can sit at the feet of thinkers, questioners, and intellectuals. Thinking critically cannot be taught in a 30-minute or 1-hour television show. Nor can it be abundantly found in the high visual and low physical activity and movement of video games. Education can be found in words, in ideas, in soaking up wisdom from generations past. No, children may not be able to read until later in their childhood, but being cultured to learn and seek knowledge can be an element of their life as natural as growing. In future research, I hope to interview the children of parents, particularly mothers, who have established their careers in academia. With their insight and reflection, I would hope to also understand ways in which their parents' occupation and education has affected their views on life and school. Instead of noticing all the ways children are "not allowed," I hope to look for points of entry where a child can grow in their own talents and abilities.

I do not want to diminish the roles and responsibilities of the housewife – something that also requires much creativity, patience, and ingenuity. If this is for those with dreams and aspirations for continuing their education, yes, it is possible. The final interview question called for advice for upcoming students in regards to having a family and pursuing an academic career,

and responses mainly focused on the necessity of having a spouse who understands your dreams and who supports you in your ambitions. Having a good academic mentor also seemed integral to the academic experience and as a tool to survive the hostile environment, as well as holding on to the respective dream career.

The stories of these women have taught me that higher education can be an open door to pursue a field of work that I am happy with. They have demonstrated moments of courage and resilience in the midst of a male-dominated world. It is on their shoulders that the women of the future can make strides to accept and tackle the call to implementing the minds and abilities of women. My value is greater than the fruit of my womb, but also in power of my mind to discern and think for myself, and make my dreams a reality.

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Figure 1. Words to the Wise: Abstract of Lessons Learned by the Participants

❖ Take off a year after your BA, try to do as much as possible, plan your pregnancies after certain milestones. Find natural breaks where it makes sense, there's never really a right time. Get the support you need. When you are undergrad, don't even think about it yet. – Interview 4, paraphrased

❖ "It is possible, but it is very challenging to have a family and an academic position. Pray for guidance, and try to form productive professional work systems with those who share your work-ethic and values. Co-authorships are not a bad thing…" – Interview 10

❖ "I would strongly suggest that anyone contemplating pursuing a Ph.D. have a great support system of family and friends. These persons should not be intrusive or demanding, but be there to support and encourage. A very strong connection with the religion of choice is also recommended. A spouse or partner who can assist with financial support and also support with needed chores and concerns is also helpful. One of the most important persons is the faculty mentor who should not only be expert in the field, but understanding about personal life needs. If at all possible, delaying children until the Ph.D. is completed is ideal." – Interview 7

❖ "I would say one of the most important things is to have a spouse who truly understands your goals, and not only understands you, but supports you in what you need to accomplish." – Interview 3

❖ "If I had advice, what I would tell somebody who was just starting, Don't give up, is one thing, and if it's gonna work, it's gonna work, and things will fall into place for you, but it might come about in odd ways. It might not be what you expect, and you will also have to be prepared to sometimes fabricate your own job. And make your own job in a place." – Interview 1

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=8)

Participant	Age	Race/ethnicity	Years to get Ph.D.	Major of study in graduate school	Number of children	Kids during graduate school?
1	35	African American	9	School Psychology	2	No
2	37	White American	8	Medical Anthropology	1	No
3	44	Caucasian	12	Biology	1	Yes (young)
4	Mid-40s	African American	10	Computer Science Education	1	No
5	48	African American	7	Education	3	No
6	56	African American	5	Speech Pathology	3	Yes (young)
7	63	White	20	Nursing and Marriage and Family Counseling	1	Yes (young)
8	65	White	16	Anthropology	3	Yes (older)
Averages	**49.125**	--	**10.875**		**1.875**	--