QUEERING ACADEMIA:
QUEER FACULTY MOTHERS AND WORK-FAMILY ENRICHMENT

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The purpose of this multiple case narrative study was to understand the experiences of queer (i.e., lesbian, queer, gay) faculty mothers who simultaneously navigated motherhood and academia. Work-family enrichment and queering (queer as a verb, informed by queer theory) were the frameworks for this study.

I conducted individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seven tenured queer mothers who were also faculty members from doctoral universities. I then constructed participants' narratives by analyzing the data to reveal narrative themes and restorying participants' transcripts focusing on the three-dimensional inquiry space: interaction, continuity, and situation as well as the interrelated tensions: temporality, people, action, certainty, and context. I analyzed narratives specifically considering work-family enrichment aspects of roles, resources, and transfers of those resources as well as for additional emergent codes and themes.

From the data, several themes emerged that described the experiences of queer faculty mothers. First, I present findings related to work climate, including as it related to sexual orientation, parenting roles, and tenure and promotion. Next, participants' support systems included colleagues, partners, and students. Third, participants’ well-being benefitted from four primary ways in which work and family roles enrich one another that contributed to their enhanced well-being: their ability to prioritize, attempts to balance roles, enjoyment, and commitment to social justice. Finally, participants experienced work-family enrichment. Of the five categories of resources, each was generated and transferred by at least four participants (flexibility – seven participants, skills and perspectives – six participants, social capital – five
participants, material resources – four participants, and psychological and physical resources – four participants).

I conclude with several implications for practice and research. Department chairs, administrators, and colleagues should employ an individualized approach, support early-career queer faculty mothers, encourage work-family balance and enrichment of queer faculty mothers, and address institutional biases. Implications for future research are to include people not represented, delve deeper into paths for work-family enrichment resource transferal, focus on issues queer faculty mothers needed support regarding and what forms of support were most beneficial, more accurately examine success, and look into the pervasiveness of internalized oppression among queer faculty mothers.
“Some might tell you there’s no hope in hand just because they feel hopeless, but you don’t have to be a thing like that. You be a ship in a bottle set sail” (Matthews, 2003, track 11).

I dedicate this dissertation to my own ships in a bottle set sail, my family,

my incredible wife and co-parent, Kate,

my loving parents, Kathy and Ed,

my friend and father of our children, Steve,

and my dear children, Robert, Lyndon, Molly, and Emmett.

You are my world. Thank you all for your love, support, and sacrifice.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In this study, I sought to identify the experiences of an understudied population: queer faculty mothers who have successfully attained tenure and promotion. This contributes to the academic and queer mother literatures by examining, from a strengths-based perspective, the impact of motherhood and academia specifically for faculty members who identify as queer mothers. In this introduction, I briefly overview faculty mother and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) faculty issues, provide the background for and the context of the problem to be investigated by my research, present the purpose of my study along with my research questions, provide definitions for key terms, and discuss the significance of this study.

Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden (2013) summarized some of the gendered discrepancies among higher education faculty poignantly: “Put simply, there are far fewer women at the top of the academic ladder, and these women are much less likely to be married or have children than are the men at the top” (p. 1). Those who simultaneously fulfill the roles of mother and academician are faced with two greedy roles, in that both demand commitment and dedication (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). In their professional roles, mothers must “fight workplace norms and have to prove their commitment and competence” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 45), even more so than their non-parenting women peers. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) noted that the common misconception that motherhood and faculty member are irreconcilable roles is only reinforced by the prevalent, even if unwritten and informal, warning (under the guise of encouragement):

You can have a faculty career and a family, so long as you time everything perfectly, perform at an unreasonably high level, learn to function without sleep, neglect any personal needs, and forgo happiness and sanity – at least until you get tenure. (p. 1)
Sentiments such as these are representative of the climate for faculty mothers, which seems not always to be family friendly.

In Rankin’s (2004) study of campus climate for LGBT people, she studied universities she identified as “among the most queer-friendly campuses in the country” (p. 18), and even in light of that found “that many queer people on campuses across the country . . . experience an inhospitable climate” (p. 18). Rankin cautioned that even in these problematic findings of an inhospitable climate, her “study may . . . significantly understate the problems facing queer students and employees at colleges and universities” (p. 18) because the colleges and universities surveyed in her study were not representative of the majority of U.S. schools (98% of which did not have queer student centers at the time of her survey). Although Rankin’s reported findings did not delineate the percentage who were faculty versus those who were other university staff members, “twenty respondents replied affirmatively when asked whether they had ‘been denied university/college employment or promotion due to [their] sexual orientation or gender identity’” (p. 20). Nearly half of the respondents declined to answer this question at all. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents reported that they “conceal their sexual identity to avoid discrimination” (p. 20). Moreover, as Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) found, “LGBQ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer] faculty members had more negative perceptions of campus climate than their LGBQ student and staff counterparts” (p. 14), and the majority attributed perceived harassment to be related to their sexual identity. From these data, it appears the climate for LGBQ faculty members also is not always supportive.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) described cumulative disadvantage as the “tendency [even in environments that outwardly seem to seek gender equity] to overlook the micro inequities that can accumulate to disproportionately hold back women in their careers” (p. 40).
As faculty mothers seem to suffer from cumulative disadvantage over time (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) and, for queer faculty members, “the intersection of multiple cultural and social identities increases the risk for negative perceptions of campus climate” (Rankin et al., 2010, p. 13), it seems likely that queer faculty mothers also experience cumulative disadvantage in academia. Yet, there are queer faculty mothers who appear to have reconciled their mothering and faculty roles to become successful academic mothers. Some of these faculty mothers hold tenured professorships and leadership positions within academia. How have they navigated the challenges and demands these roles simultaneously offer? Were they warned that family and faculty roles were irreconcilable? Further, were those their experiences?

The answers to the aforementioned questions may help early career queer faculty members navigate academic motherhood. Beyond this, findings of this study may have implications for supporting the work-life balance and enrichment of queer faculty mothers as well as for challenging heteronormative constructs within the academy. I have described and analyzed the experiences of queer faculty mothers who hold tenured professorships.

**Background**

Women hold an increasing percentage of faculty positions in academe (Mason, Wolfinger, & Goulden, 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005, 2012; West & Curtis, 2006). Historically and in the majority of these studies, this research has been grounded in the gender binary and only reflects cisgender men and women, thereby rendering trans* and gender nonconforming faculty invisible.

Although they held only about a quarter of faculty positions in 1972, “by 2003, women comprised 43 percent of all faculty, 39 percent of full-time and 48 percent of part-time faculty” (West & Curtis, 2006, p. 5). In the 2005-06 academic year, women held 50.8% of full-time
faculty positions at associate granting institutions and only 34.1% at doctoral granting institutions (West & Curtis, 2006). Furthermore, in this same academic year, women held “only 24 percent of full professor positions in the U.S.” (West & Curtis, 2006, p. 4). In the 2010-2011 academic year in the United States, focusing solely on faculty members in the highest rank, there were about 62,500 male professors and 23,100 female professors at 4-year public institutions, approximately 37,100 male professors and 14,700 female professors at 4-year private nonprofit institutions, and roughly 1,100 male professors and 500 female professors at 4-year private for-profit institutions. (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2011, p. 3)

These data total approximately 27% (4-year public), 28% (4-year private), and 31% (4-year private for-profit) women. In the Fall of 2013, only 26% of all professors, 34% of all associate professors, 38% of all assistant professors, and 44% of all instructors and lecturers were White women; data were not robust enough to further break down the total of faculty members of other races/ethnicities by sex (Kena et al., 2015). Historically, the trend of women employed in faculty positions does not seem to have improved significantly, particularly in upper level positions (i.e., women hold far fewer professor appointments than instructor appointments).

Women have not obtained tenured and tenure-track faculty positions at the same rate that doctorates have been awarded to women (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; West & Curtis, 2006), and men are twice as likely to hold tenured positions (Wolfinger et al., 2009; West & Curtis, 2006), particularly among positions at four-year, highly ranked institutions (Williams, 2004). Although there has been some progress, these trends indicate that, in general, men have higher ranked positions and are employed at more prestigious institutions than women.
A great deal of literature refers to the differential gendered effects of various policies, procedures, and norms. The glass ceiling “prevents successful women from reaching the summit of their professions” (Williams, 2004, p. 17). This is just one of the many subtle gender biases evident in academia (Williams, 2004). Williams (2004) asserted that advancement-related standards and scrutiny are stricter for women than men. Furthermore, these higher standards for women exacerbate demands upon tenure-track women faculty members to demonstrate their competence in research quality and quantity (Williams, 2004).

For numerous women, hitting the maternal wall may prohibit them from ever encountering a glass ceiling (Williams, 2004, p. 17). The maternal wall describes stereotyping, bias, and resulting wage discrimination that disproportionately disadvantages mothers in the workforce, including the academy (Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004). It occurs after pregnancy or maternity leave and results in colleagues’ and supervisors’ perceptions that the new mother has had a decrease in or totally lacks competence. Williams (2004) wrote,

Academic mothers also often report a particular form of attribution bias: colleagues who before they had children used to assume that the women were writing or at a conference when they were not in the office may well assume after they return from maternity leave that they are taking care of kids – even if they are at the library working on a book. (p. 19)

In institutions of higher education, “the maternal wall is documented demographically by showing the dearth of mothers in desirable faculty jobs” (Williams, 2004, p. 17).

While some people believe that the maternal wall is an active form of career discrimination against parenting women, others argue that it is not active discrimination but
rather a woman’s choice to become a parent that contributes to her disadvantaged status in the workplace (Crosby et al., 2004). However, Williams (2002) argued,

Choice does not negate the existence of discrimination. . . If employers define the ideal worker as someone who takes no time off for childbearing or childrearing, they are framing their ideal worker as someone with the body and traditional life patterns of a man. Regardless of mothers’ choices, that is sex discrimination. (p. 828)

As such, a woman’s choice to become a mother does not negate the sex discrimination involved in the institutionally perpetuated myth of the ideal faculty member (i.e., a woman without children or a man).

**Statement of the Problem**

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) noted, “The success of [faculty mothers] is more often due to their own agency and choices than to the support of their academic institutions” (p. 11), yet they also wrote that institutions are increasingly adopting “family friendly” policies and procedures in an attempt to foster a more supportive climate. “Still, institutions of higher education could do more to be supportive and to make their climates more hospitable, accepting, and facilitative of the success of all their faculty members” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 11). Faculty mothers in particular "fear not being taken seriously professionally or jeopardizing their chances for getting tenure by talking about family issues" (Dallimore, 2003, p. 234). I wonder whether the aforementioned campus climate issues for queer faculty members combine with, and may be complicated by, challenging campus climate issues facing faculty mothers. I sought to understand how queer faculty mothers have experienced these roles together.

Some literature (e.g., Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) highlights work-family enrichment rather than simply examining work-family conflict. I am interested in exploring if the
professional and family roles of queer faculty mothers actually enrich and enhance each other rather than (or in addition to) detracting from one another (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

**Purpose of the Study**

In this study, I used the lens of work-family enrichment to identify the experiences of the queer faculty members who have been successful in tenure and promotion processes as mothers and simultaneously navigated academia and motherhood. I hope that their experiences will help to inform early-career and aspiring faculty women as well as higher education administrators about the ways in which family and professional roles can benefit, rather than be a detriment for, queer academic mothers. This will contribute in a new way as I have approached faculty mother research from a strengths-based perspective and focused on the intersection of their roles as faculty members, mothers, and extended the existing research to include queer mothers.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question guiding this study was “What are the experiences of queer faculty mothers who simultaneously navigate motherhood and academia?” Four sub-questions informed this study.

1. How has parenting influenced the faculty life (i.e., teaching, research, service) of queer faculty mothers who have raised child(ren) prior to attaining tenure?
2. How do queer faculty mothers define success (as faculty members and as mothers)?
3. From whom/where do queer faculty mothers draw support?
4. What are their experiences of and responses to heteronormativity within the academy?

**Definitions and Key Terms**

In Mezey’s (2008) research on the reasons for and context of lesbians’ decisions about becoming mothers, she included only lesbian mothers who “within their identities as lesbians,
had become or were actively seeking (i.e., in the process of adopting or inseminating) to become mothers” (p. 33). This specifically excluded mothers “who had birthed or adopted children while in heterosexual relationships and later identified as lesbians” (p. 33). Although Mezey’s justification was sound for her own study, for the purpose of this study, I defined *queer mothers* as mothers who are (a) residential parent for children (biological and non-biological) and who presently identify as lesbian, gay, or as queer (which were the preferred identity labels for participants of this study; although some participants did not identify specifically as queer, they did not object to the term queer representing participants’ sexual orientations in combination). Queer is a complex term, and some people perceive it as a negative term. For the purpose of this study, I considered the term *queer* to be empowering and inclusive of people whose self-concept of gender and/or sexuality is non-binary or fluid.

*Heteronormativity* refers to “the assumption that heterosexuality is the only normal or natural sexual identity or expression” (Warner, 1993, as cited in Griffin, D’Errico, Harro, & Schiff, 2007).

**Scope of the Study**

The extant relevant literature concerning faculty mothers and lesbian or queer mothers overwhelmingly is focused on gender-based motherhood; mothers are those who identify, either genetically or socially (e.g., adoptive or step-parents) (Folgerø, 2008), as both parents and women. While I was open to including queer faculty members who identified as mothers but not women, all participants self-identified as women (including those who identified as queer [rather than lesbian] with regard to their sexual orientation). Additionally, this study was limited to a specific group of queer academic mothers who have attained tenure and promotion in their faculty roles. Participants in this study each hailed from different universities.
Significance of the Study

This study may help to illuminate ways in which institutions of higher education might combat the normative expectations and beliefs about the incompatibility of motherhood and success in academia. Some of the extant literature unveiled the benefit, for mothers who work in student affairs and other administrative roles in academia, of having ‘pioneers’ and role models within the university (Beeny, Guthrie, Rhodes, & Terrell, 2005; Marshall, 2009; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Snyder, 2011). Administrators in institutions of higher education can focus on building a similar network for faculty members who are new mothers or who are contemplating motherhood and for students (undergraduate and graduate) who may aspire to faculty roles. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) referred to “new-generation” departments that were influential in supporting the combination of work and family. These departments “included senior faculty [tenured and/or higher ranking faculty members] members with young children, department chairs and other senior colleagues with their own grown children dealing with work and family issues, along with male faculty members who are more involved with their families” (p. 195). In these departments, early-career faculty members benefit from the role modeling of mid- and later-career faculty members who effectively balance work and family and are open about these issues rather than keeping them hidden (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s research made significant contributions and presented many implications for strengthening support for faculty mothers in higher education; however, of their 120 participants, only two identified as lesbians.

My hope is that this research will contribute to the literature in a new way. Might the community of scholars within the field of higher education benefit from the influence of these leading queer academic mothers? What can we learn from their non-heteronormative
experiences as we move forward in creating supportive climates for faculty parents, specifically for queer faculty mothers? How might the culture of academia further support work-life balance for queer faculty mothers?

**Summary**

In this study, I explored the experiences of queer faculty mothers who held tenured professorships. I conducted this exploration through narrative inquiry and data analysis. In Chapter II, I provide my theoretical framework and a review of the extant literature. In Chapter III, I describe narrative methodology and present the considerations for narrative inquiry as well as describing the methods used in this study. Individual participant narratives are presented in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, I present the findings of my data analysis. Finally, in Chapter VI, I present my conclusions and the implications for practice and future research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although the body of literature examining the experiences of women who work and teach in institutions of higher education has grown, there remains limited scholarly research on the experiences of queer faculty members or queer mothers. I have found no literature addressing the experiences of women who simultaneously are queer, faculty members, and mothers. The extant literature base on queer faculty members is largely focused on campus climate (e.g., Rankin et al., 2010) and degrees of outness in academia (e.g., Orlov & Allen, 2014; Stuck, 1997; Tierney, 1997; Vaccaro, 2012). The existing literature on lesbian mothers primarily focuses on choices about family planning, such as healthcare, conception, and adoption (e.g., Luce, 2010); the experiences of the children of lesbian mothers, such as adjustment factors (e.g., Henehan, Rothblum, Solomon, & Balsam, 2007; van Dam, 2004); and legal issues, such as divorce, child custody, and adoption (e.g., Maggiore, 1992).

As Maggiore (1992) noted, “Rather than to try fitting lesbian mothers into a traditional family model and to assume deficiencies in the lesbian family by the very act of comparing, it is necessary to see how lesbians define themselves and their families” (p. xxvii). My hope is that the present study will extend this statement to unveil the ways in which queer faculty mothers experience these roles (i.e., queer, faculty member, and mother). In order to begin to understand the experiences of queer faculty mothers, in this chapter, I present the theoretical framework from which my analysis emerged. Additionally, I summarize the extant literature pertaining to faculty mothers, queer faculty members, and queer mothers. I conclude with the need for further research.
Theoretical Framework: Work-Family Enrichment

The theoretical framework that informed this study is work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The theory served as a lens through which I analyzed the data. Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) model of work-family enrichment included two components of quality of life: performance and affect. They asserted their model extended extant research by identifying five categories of resources that could promote the positive work-family life interaction, two ways in which this enrichment occurs, and multiple conditions that either foster or challenge the enrichment. Work-family enrichment is defined as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73). They theorized that

The resources generated in Role A can promote high performance and positive affect in Role B and that the extent to which a resource heightens performance and positive affect is moderated by the salience of Role B, the perceived relevance of the resource to Role B, and the consistency of the resource with the requirements and norms of Role B. (p. 80)

Work and family roles are interchangeable in the model, as the model explained the influence of work roles on performance and positive affect in family roles and vice versa.

Resources

Generated resources are a primary consideration in Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) model; “a resource is an asset that may be drawn on when needed to solve a problem or cope with a challenging situation” (p. 80). The specific categories of resources to which they refer include “skills and perspectives, psychological and physical resources, social-capital resources, flexibility, and material resources” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80).
In the first category of resources, *skills and perspectives*, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) broadly referred to social and intellectual skills including “coping skills, multitasking skills, and knowledge and wisdom derived from role experiences” (p. 80). The other component of this resource, perspectives, includes respect, valuing diversity, empathy, and trust. In the second category, *psychological and physical resources*, Greenhaus and Powell included positive regard for self (i.e., self-efficacy, and self-esteem), physical health, and “positive emotions about the future, such as optimism and hope” (p. 80). *Social capital resources* include influence and information that “are derived from interpersonal relationships in work and family roles that may assist individuals in achieving their goals” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80). *Flexibility* involves the individual’s decisions regarding “the timing, pace, and location at which role requirements are met” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80). The final resource, *material resources*, includes the monetary and material rewards of the individual’s roles.

**Paths for Work-Family Enrichment**

These resources generated in one role (work or family) can influence the performance and/or effect of the other role in two ways. Resources can be directly transferred to the other role; Greenhaus and Powell (2006) “refer[red] to this mechanism as the *instrumental path*, because the application of a resource has a direct instrumental effect on performance in another role” (p. 80, italics in original). For example, relational skills developed or matured as a parent can be implemented at work in ways that enhance work performance. Greenhaus and Powell hypothesized that a person is more likely to apply resources from one role to another role when the latter is highly salient to the individual. For example, if the individual’s mothering role is highly salient, she will be more likely to apply material resources gained from her work role to benefit her family role. Similarly, an individual would only transfer resources from one role to
another when she deemed them to be relevant to the performance of the other role. Furthermore, “participation in work and family roles can buffer individuals from distress in [the other] roles” (Del Pino, 2011, p. 7).

Alternately, in regard to the affective path, “a resource generated in Role A can promote positive affect within Role A, which, in turn, produces high performance and positive affect in Role B” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80). This can occur through direct effects (such as the consideration that income generated from work roles contributes to “total family income [which] promotes marital stability” [Haas, 1999, as cited in Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 82]). This can also occur through enhancement effects (i.e., “since most individuals like to do something well rather than poorly, the consequences of performing well in a role are likely to be reflected in increased positive affect” [Judge, Thoreson, Bono, & Patton, 2001, as cited in Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 83]). The same principle of resource salience to role applies in the affective path as in the instrumental path.

**Theoretical Context**

Since 2006, Greenhaus and Powell’s work-family enrichment article has been cited nearly 1400 times (per a Google Scholar search). This model’s prevalence in higher education research is not yet widespread, although there are a few studies in the context of higher education in which researchers have cited Greenhaus and Powell’s work. Santos and Cabral-Cardoso (2008) studied the work and family lives of 32 faculty members at a Portuguese university, but work-family enrichment was not their theoretical framework as they merely cited Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) work in their literature review. Similarly, Campbell (2015) cited work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) in her study on the work-life balance of 10 women who hold positions as senior academic affairs officers in theological schools; however, work-family
enrichment was not the foundation of her research. I found this to be the case in a few other higher education related studies (e.g., Murray, Tremaine, & Fountaine, 2012; Williams, 2014).

In at least three cases, Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) model was used more explicitly. Schenewark’s (2008) doctoral dissertation research examined work-family enrichment for college coaches. Schenewark found that coaches with families experienced both work-family conflict and work-family enrichment, but that levels of enrichment were higher than levels of conflict. In Trussell’s (2015) autoethnography of her experiences as a junior (pre-tenured), tenure-track faculty mother, she asserted that her experiences supported Greenhaus and Powell’s research and that “in many ways, being a mother and a scholar are complementary” (p. 171). She further noted, “The transition to motherhood enhanced my academic scholarship and teaching while having a professional identity brings a holistic sense of well-being to my family role” (Trussell, 2015, p. 171). Thirdly, in Salehi, Rasdi, and Ahmad’s (2014) research, 295 academics at the Malaysian Research Universities completed questionnaires about their experiences of work-family enrichment. They specifically found that extraversion, social support, core self-evaluation, and job autonomy supported their work-family enrichment.

There may be limitations to using Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) framework for this research. Maertz and Boyar (2011) cautioned:

WF [work-family] enrichment researchers should . . . consider that people may completely underestimate or not recognize their ability to expand their resources through WF role enactment for any number of reasons (e.g., low self-efficacy, past punishments for dual engagement, clinical depression, etc.). If an individual truly refuses to believe that his or her [sic] personal resources can expand through greater WF role enactment, it
would be exceedingly unlikely that such an individual would experience WF enrichment. (p. 74)

I considered this limitation in formulating the interview protocol. However, all participants did experience work-family enrichment (see Chapter V). This dissertation extends the literature by grounding this narrative, university faculty-based study in work-family enrichment.

Conceptual Framework: Queering

I also considered queer theory and the ways in which queer faculty mothers queer the academy and notions of family. In considering family, Goss (1997) stated the following:

_Procreativity_ may refer to the literal renewal of the earth through human reproduction or reproductive strategies, or it may also refer to the contributions made for renewal and transformation of society. . . . Whom then do we call family? The appropriation of the term family is not an assimilationist strategy of finding respectability in general society. _We are not degaying or delesbianing ourselves by describing ourselves as family._ In fact, we are Queering the notion of family and creating families reflective of our life choices. (p. 12, italics in original)

In this light, considering _queer_ as a verb, queering served as a conceptual framework for this study. Therefore, I present an overview of queer theory relevant to families.

As I am considering the term queer as a verb and/or adjective, it is not meant to be conflated with an identity label encompassing LGBT identities. As Oswald, Kuvalanka, Blume, and Berkowitz (2009) stated,

Although the term queer is often used as an analogue for LGBT, using queer theory is not about studying LGBT or queer people as a minoritized group (Giffney, 2004). Rather,
the unit of analysis for queer theory is heteronormativity regardless of the specific group
or phenomenon under study. (p. 49)

As with many poststructural concepts, “just what ‘queer’ signifies or includes or refers to
is by no means easy to say” (Abelove, 1993, p. 20). Jagose (1996) noted, “Given the extent of its
commitment to denaturalization, queer itself can have neither a foundational logic nor a
consistent set of characteristics” (p. 86); it is therefore likely easier to describe what queer is not.
However, Berry (2014) modified a prior conception of queer as “whatever is at odds with the
normal, the legitimate, the dominant” (p. 62). Queer theorists work to deconstruct binary
conceptualizations of sexuality and gender (Creswell, 2013).

As it is typically oriented in postmodernism or poststructuralism, queer theory’s focus is
critical and deconstructive (Creswell, 2013). Queer theory is driven by resistance to societal
notions of sexuality and gender, decenters identity, critiques the heteronormative mainstream
homosexuality, provides a discourse on power, rejects the conceptions of normal and deviant,
and posits sexuality is fluid and changing. Warner noted, “to oversimplify: queer researchers
seek to speak about gender, sexuality, and desire (amongst other topics) in ways that
problematic the referent” (2004, p. 324).

Queerness challenges “conventional understandings of sexual identity by deconstructing
the categories, oppositions, and equations that sustain them” (Jagose, 1996, p. 97). It resists
heteronormativity, “an ideology that promotes gender conventionality, heterosexuality, and
family traditionalism as the correct way for people to be” (Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005, p.
143). Heteronormativity is an implicit and compulsory moral lens through which identities and
conceptions of what is normal are socially constructed (Oswald et al., 2005). It is only through
heteronormative categorizations and constructions that the conventions are understood, so when they are challenged, queerness emerges. This is a continuous, fluid process. As Oswald et al. (2009) noted, “Most people’s lives are a combination of resisting and upholding heteronormativity” (p. 50).

Abes and Kasch (2007) summarized queer theory well when they noted, “[it] critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender” (p. 620). In a queer theory lens, gender and sexuality are seen as fluid, unstable, performative, and socially constructed concepts (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Butler, 2004; Jagose, 1996). Furthermore, these constructs “chang[e] as the individual affects society and as society affects the individual” (Abes & Kasch, 2007, p. 621).

**Queer Theory and Families**

This study will focus more specifically on the sexuality and familial aspects of queer theory than on gender. Oswald et al. (2005) noted that “Heteronormativity entails a convergence of at least three binary opposites: ‘real’ males and ‘real’ females versus gender ‘deviants,’ ‘natural’ sexuality versus ‘unnatural’ sexuality, and ‘genuine’ families versus ‘pseudo’ families” (p. 144). It is in the queering processes of doing gender, sexuality, and family that these binary norms are challenged (Oswald et al., 2005).

Like Krane (2001), I believe queer theory is useful in challenging normative constructs; Goldberg’s (2010) research helped me connect these ideas. Goldberg asserted,

Lesbian and gay parents (and their children, for that matter) necessarily negotiate parenthood within a societal system that is fundamentally gendered (e.g., biological motherhood is theoretically and culturally valued above any other type of motherhood or parenthood; Polikoff, 1990). In this way, it can be said that lesbians and gay men “do
gender” by virtue of their participation in parenthood. And yet at the same time, they necessarily exist outside of the traditional gender and family system as “family outlaws” (Calhoun, 1997), thereby liberating them, at least theoretically, from some of the strictures of gendered parenthood; further, they enact and interpret their own parenting in the context of same-sex relationships. Thus, even while they actively “do gender” and “do parenthood,” lesbian and gay parents and their families also challenge and expose the meaning and limits of gender – and inextricably, standard or traditional conceptualizations of family – by virtue of their participation in parenthood. (Goldberg, 2010, p. 11)

In this dissertation, identifying and challenging heteronormative conceptions of sexual orientation and family is one focus.

**Review of Extant Research**

Herein I review the literature that informs the present study on lesbian or queer faculty mothers. As there is no research directly pertaining to women who hold that specific combination of experiences, I provide information on the experiences of four groups: working mothers, faculty mothers, lesbian faculty members, and lesbian mothers.

**Working Mothers**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), 69.9% of mothers with children younger than 18 participated in the labor force in 2013 (either worked or were actively looking for work). Mothers whose children were infants participated at a lower rate (57.3%) than those whose children were five or younger (63.9%) and those whose youngest child was between six and 17 years old (74.7%). These numbers have remained approximately the same over the last 25 years; in 1990, these numbers were 66.7%, 53.6%, 58.2%, and 74.7%, respectively (United
States Department of Labor, 2014). Clearly, the majority of mothers in the U.S. are working mothers.

Mothers choose to work for various reasons. In 1989, Scarr, Phillips, and McCartney stated “Most women in the labor force work primarily because the family needs the money and secondarily for their own personal self-actualization” (p. 1402). More recent research reveals this has not changed. Baxter (2008) found that two-thirds of women noted financial reasons were a primary factor in decision to return to work. For about two-thirds of those women this was not the only factor noted; other factors noted were to maintain skills and qualifications (27%), that they preferred to work (21%), and that they feared being away from the workforce for a longer period of time would harm their future careers (9%). The other factors noted included that the employer wanted the woman to return to work or that a new job opportunity arose (Baxter, 2008).

Regardless of the reason a mother works, how does she manage her roles as both worker and mother? How does she avoid or manage work-family conflict? Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identified three sources of work-family conflict: time-, strain-, and behavior-based. Time-based conflict arises from spending time in one role to the detriment of time for another role. Strain-based conflict arises from experiencing pressure, like stress, in one role to the detriment of fulfilling obligations in another role. Behavior-based conflict arises from behaviors required for one role that, if performed in the other role, would be to the detriment of that other role.

Nearly 20 years ago, Tingey, Kiger, and Riley (1996) “found that the more the partners’ work-family spillover and the less the respondent’s satisfaction with child-care arrangements, the higher the [mother’s] perceived stress” (p. 187). They found several factors
that surprisingly were not associated with stress for working mothers including satisfaction with
the way the parents divided household tasks, performing emotional tasks in the mother’s
relationship with her child, control over the mother’s own work-family spillover, and whether
she was employed full or part time.

Allen et al. discovered that “positive affect, internal locus of control, self-efficacy, and
optimism appear to help individuals avert conflicting work and family demands” (2011, p. 22).
They attributed this to physiological resiliency. Furthermore, they found that agreeableness and
conscientiousness reduced work-family conflict, especially with regard to time-based and strain-
based conflicts. They noted that people who demonstrate agreeableness are more likely to gain
support and that people who are conscientious are likely skilled in managing time and multiple
roles (Allen et al., 2011).

Mothering Issues in Academia

“The [Survey of Doctoral Recipients] shows that 45 percent of tenured women faculty
are childless, compared with 26 percent of their male colleagues” (Mason et al., 2013, p. 69).
Additionally, at least one in three of the childless women faculty members stated that they “wish
they had children” (Mason et al., 2013, p. 69), and 64 percent of faculty mothers who only had
one child expressed regret that they did not have more than one child.

According to Swanson and Johnston, unlike non-faculty mothers, faculty mothers
“describe additional expectations of vigilance, responsibility and intimacy” (2003, p. 70). As the
result, they experience increased “tension between professional success and motherhood”
(Swanson & Johnston, 2003, p. 70).

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) contributed to the faculty mother literature by
highlighting the stories of mothers who have had success in academia, whereas previously the
literature had a predominantly negative focus on the experiences of women in academia, particularly those who left academia due to the challenges they experienced (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). They noted that although the numbers of faculty women are increasing, the “expectations and the role of the professoriate” (p. 8) are not changing at the same rate. “For the most part the traditional, normative view of the professor – as a single-minded academic resource, free from external distractions – has remained” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 8).

**The biological clock.** As Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004b) stated, “Biological and tenure clocks have the unfortunate tendency to tick loudly, clearly, and at the same time” (p. 29). However, while waiting to have a child or children until after earning tenure may appear ideal, this may not be desirable due to the length of the tenure process combined with possible fertility issues related to ‘the biological clock’ (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004a). As Ph.D. recipients average 34 years of age, “many women spend the time during their doctoral programs and assistant professorships trying to reconcile their desire for children with their wish to be taken seriously as academics” (Sallee, 2008, p. 182). This relates to the broader issue of faculty mothers’ legitimacy as faculty members.

**Legitimacy as faculty members.** Many women question whether they can be taken seriously as faculty members who also have children; this question arises, in part, regarding their utilization of parental leave and in deciding whether to have children pre- or post-tenure (Sallee, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). As Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) noted, tenure and promotion processes are dictated by “dominant discourses . . . [that] do not allow for stopping the tenure clock or taking leave without fear of bias and/or retribution” (p. 42). Some faculty mothers fear “that if they use work/family policies to assist them they will be seen as ‘weak’”
and less committed to their professional role (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 42). Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden’s (2013) participants explained this in their own words.

When I cannot attend departmental events, I’m blamed and ridiculed for spending too much time with my children or for using them as “an excuse.” Because I commute over an hour to work, I sometimes have to miss social events in the evening. My department is extremely critical and blames me for “not being around” even though I’m much more assiduous than my senior . . . male colleagues. (pp. 74-75)

Another participant stated,

Children will most certainly curtail faculty presence and credibility within their department and their campus. As one of the only faculty in a department of fourteen faculty colleagues to have a child, I have found my situation as a single mother to have marginalized me from my colleagues and the community of research and scholarship. (Mason et al., 2013, p. 75)

The blame, ridicule, and curtailed credibility these participants spoke of are reasons faculty mothers have concerns about others’ perceptions of their legitimacy as faculty members.

**Rank, tenure, and promotion related parent issues.** For women, parenting status seems to have a relationship with the attainment of tenure and promotion. Women with children are more likely to hold adjunct professorships than are women without children and men. Specifically, “Mothers with children under 6 are disproportionately likely to have adjunct professorships, but women without young children are employed in these positions at rates only slightly higher than are men” (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2009, p. 1612). A considerable percentage of assistant professors have children, 58.3% of male assistant professors and 47.3%
of female assistant professors. For tenure-track assistant professors who have children, women are nearly twice as likely as men to be single parents (12% vs. 6.7%; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004a).

Women faculty members with young children are 22% less likely to hold tenure-track positions than those without children (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008). Additionally, Mason et al. (2013) noted, according to the Survey of Doctorate Recipients, “A female faculty member starting a tenure-track job is 61% less likely than a comparable man to have a child under six at home” (pp. 65-66). Wolfinger et al. (2008) postulated the lower tenure achievement rates were related to the amount of time faculty mothers needed to devote to caring for their families and children.

**Work-family conflict.** Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004a) reported women faculty parents in their study commonly described going home to complete housework and childcare tasks following their work day in academe as a “second shift.” The “second-shift” feeling faculty mothers experience is one of the factors that contributes to the conflict between work and family roles (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a, 2012). Indeed, this seems related to the Sax, Hagedorn, Arredondo, and Dicrisi (2002) finding that, at the same levels of research productivity, when compared with their male faculty parent counterparts, female faculty parents spent less time on research and more time on housekeeping and childcare duties.

There are numerous other factors contributing to the conflict between faculty mothers’ work and family roles. These include normative expectations (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004b), competing demands and expectations (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004b), and the time needed to complete household tasks (Sax, Hagedorn, Arrendondo, & Dicrisi, 2002). Furthermore, there are distinct issues related to childcare options, faculty mothers’ productivity, and the hostile environment in which they work.
Normative cultural expectations include “the ideals of appropriate parenting and successful career achievement” (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004b, p. 106), which many women fear are unattainable in combination. While Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004a) asserted that the institutions of higher education that promote balance between work and home roles amplify the quality of both roles, not all institutions do this well. Jacobs and Winslow (2004b) identified the primary sources of tension in the conflict between academic work and parenting were due to the competing demands and expectations of work and home. The demands of academia included time at work and degree of flexibility in schedule, while the demands of home included household labor and parenting duties. In summary of the time-related work-family conflict, one of the participants in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) study captured the constant conflict distressingly when she said, “Ever since I had my son, I’ve felt like when I’m with him I should be working, when I’m not with him [working] I should be with him” (p. 55).

**Childcare options.** One of the ways institutions can positively impact faculty parents’ experience and combat the demands and expectations of work and home is to offer childcare options that are accessible and affordable (Mason et al., 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). This goes beyond the desire for a childcare facility on campus and includes alternatives such as childcare grants and emergency childcare. Mason et al. (2013) noted that it is imperative that faculty members attend conferences in order to make valuable connections and present their research. They proposed that childcare grants, “[allowing] faculty members to either bring their child to a conference or pay for child care at home,” would be beneficial in this (p. 100). Regarding emergency childcare, one of the participants in Mason et al.’s study stated,

> For me, the absolute top priority should be the emergency back-up child care program for children who can’t go to daycare for a few days (because of daycare holidays, or mild
colds, etc.). This would relieve almost all the acute stress of balancing child rearing and work. (2013, p. 100)

**Issues related to faculty productivity.** Faculty productivity issues related to parental status are difficult to quantify. Although Jacobs and Winslow (2004a, 2004b) noted that married faculty parents had lower research productivity than their unmarried or childless peers, resulting in difficulty securing tenure, their data did not demonstrate that with statistical significance. Sax et al. (2002) found that female faculty parents reported slightly lower levels of publication productivity than female faculty members without children did. However, faculty mothers perceive several issues related to faculty productivity, including “the triple whammy” (Meyers, 2012): the seemingly never-ending amount of work to be done (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012); pressures on faculty time, including an increased emphasis on teaching, increased research expectations, and an increased demand for technology use (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004b); and issues related to expectations for tenure and promotion (Mason et al., 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

Meyers (2012) discussed the liability of parenthood in academia, which occurs primarily for women because of the amount of time that women are expected to devote to childrearing. This problem is not unique to academia, but is present therein. Meyers stated,

The amount of time I have to devote to research is limited by childrearing responsibilities; my role as a mother is diminished and stigmatized by colleagues; and my scholarship is minimized because having children is seen as a deviation from being a “serious scholar.” (2012, p. 84)
Participants in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) study noted that academic work is never complete, which goes hand-in-hand with the complaint that there is not enough time to finish the work that needs to be done.

Research productivity and publications are certainly issues in the consideration of tenure and promotion. Problematically though, expectations for tenure are typically vague (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2004a). Increasingly, grant attainment is expected of faculty members going up for tenure and promotion, particularly for those in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM] fields (Mason et al., 2013). However,

Faculty women who are married with young children are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to grantsmanship [sic]. They are 21 percent less likely than tenure-track men who are married with young children to have their work partially or fully supported by federal grants or contracts on a year-to-year basis in the sciences. (Mason et al., 2013, p. 49)

Ward and Wolf-Wendel suggested that although the concern of vague tenure expectations is not exclusive to female faculty members with children, the “concern about gaps in one’s academic record due to taking time off to have a child is a distinctive concern” (2004a, p. 246).

Furthermore, this disproportionately affects women, as they are more likely than men to take this time off (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a).

**Difficult work environments.** Faculty mothers, in addition to the aforementioned issues, are frequently working in difficult environments, marked by the normative disbelief about the mismatch between faculty life and family life (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), increased isolation among faculty mothers (Mason et al., 2013), and jealousy and resentment (Mason et al., 2013). Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) discussed the normative disbelief that work-life balance is fully
possible (the aforementioned warning about faculty and family). This norm creates an environment in which women believe that they cannot or should not aspire to have both a career and family, at least not in a healthy manner. Unfortunately, some women do not believe they have a choice about their work environment. As one participant in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s study noted, “I’m place-bound with husband and kids so they know I put up with a lot more abuse” (2012, p. 68).

One of the participants in Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden’s (2013) study shared the following horrific experience from her tenure at the University of California: “When I requested maternity leave to have my second daughter, my department chair advised me to have an abortion. . . . My advice to a first time faculty parent is to find a job at another university” (pp. 74-75). Statements such as this are likely isolating (and downright cruel) for the individual on their receiving end. Not surprisingly, Mason et al. stated that faculty mothers reported feeling isolated from and by other faculty members more frequently than their men faculty parent peers: “This [isolation] creates an environment where faculty mothers feel uncomfortable and unaccepted, which doubtless further discourages childbearing” (2013, p. 75). The source of hostility is certainly not always from men in the department; Mason et al. posited, “A faculty mother’s . . . childless female colleagues may be equally disapproving [of a faculty mother’s consideration of her children as her highest priority] for several reasons” (2013, p. 75). Mason et al. postulated this disapproval resulted from the childless female colleagues’ feelings of jealousy, resentment, feeling cheated, and potential concern “that their unproductive female colleagues impugn the credibility of all women in academia” (2013, p. 76).

Benefits of parenting. Interestingly, some faculty parents identified benefits of parenting, including decreased workload dissatisfaction (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004a, 2004b;

Lower levels of workload dissatisfaction. According to Jacobs and Winslow (2004a, 2004b), married faculty members without children reported lower levels of workload dissatisfaction (27.8% dissatisfied and 7.6% very dissatisfied) than married faculty parents (32.7% dissatisfied and 8.7 % very dissatisfied). However, married faculty parents reported lower levels of workload dissatisfaction than unmarried faculty parents with children and unmarried faculty members with no children (34.6% dissatisfied and 9.5% very dissatisfied for single faculty members who have children; 35.6% dissatisfied and 12% very dissatisfied for single faculty members who do not have children). Jacobs and Winslow speculated this was an effect of the parents’ working less (although married faculty mothers in assistant professorships worked an average of 52.5 hours per week – only one hour fewer per week than their childless counterparts).

Perspective and the ‘bigger picture.’ A majority of prior studies on faculty parenting issues focused primarily on the deficits related to this role and identity (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). However, Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2005) participants frequently referred to the perspective they gained as mothers as beneficial. Although to some this may not sound like a benefit, for these women “being established in a career and in a community was a source of security, happiness, and comfort” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 67).

This perspective helped these faculty mothers recognize their abilities as well as necessary sacrifices. Furthermore, they were able to identify which sacrifices they may have
been unwilling to make. Many of Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) participants placed their children and family at the forefront of their decision-making. One stated,

No matter what, [my child] has to come first. And, you know, sometimes I have to make some hard decisions, and I manage it... I think that my career is important, but my role as a mother comes first. Ultimately, that’s what matters. (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 59)

This quote reflects what Ward and Wolf-Wendel noted, “A child changed the way work got done and also changed [their participants’] perspective on the relative importance of work in the big picture of life” (2012, p. 59).

Some of these women, at mid-career, maintained this perspective in their decisions about things such as choosing not to advance in their careers. Ward and Wolf-Wendel believed this was because of their “balanced and integrated view of their lives... what [Ward and Wolf-Wendel] call a ‘parenthood lens’ – a filter that is used to examine and vet decisions about their careers and more generally about life” (2012, p. 67). For example, one participant stated,

I’ve had to sacrifice some career advancement and stay put until the family is raised... I could be in a different position, or making more money or at a different university, possibly doing some more things if it wasn’t for the family obligations. (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 67, ellipses in original)

**Increased efficiency.** Many of the early career participants in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) study also said having a child(ren) increased their efficiency and organization skills. Some faculty mothers noted that they could no longer behave as “workaholic[s]” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 60). Ward and Wolf-Wendel wrote, “One woman explained that she now works forty hours a week because that is how much child care time she has available. She
continues, ‘Compared to the number [of hours] I used to work, forty is nothing’” (2012, p. 60).
Another participant stated, “Clearly having her [a child] was a major change in my lifestyle and how I dealt with things, and made my hours change significantly, for the good and bad. The good was I had to become much more efficient” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012, p. 59). These women clearly view this as a benefit of parenting as faculty members.

**Balance in parenting and professional roles.** For women with children older than six years of age, Wolfinger et al. (2008) found no negative effect of motherhood on the attainment of tenure-track employment and that there is a positive effect on the attainment of tenure itself (while there is a negative effect on the attainment of tenure-track employment or tenure itself for women whose children are younger than six years of age). They hypothesized this resulted from the necessary balance these academicians would have required in order to complete their doctoral studies and attain a tenure-track position while also caring for a baby or young child. Wolfinger et al. attributed this balance to the predisposition of these women to “reconcile work and family” (2008, p. 400).

For some faculty mothers, reconciliation may take the form of choosing not to go up for promotion. One of the participants in Mason et al.’s (2013) study remarked, “I decided to remain at the Associate level because of [sic] my priority of family life was higher than making an international reputation in my profession” (p. 85). For these women, reconciliation of work and family comes in the form of finding balance in satisficing. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) described this coping mechanism as their participants’ “[recognition] that they could not fulfill all of the responsibilities and expectations as well as they might if there were fewer roles to play” combined with their acceptance of that phenomenon (p. 60). Perhaps ‘enough’ is ‘good enough.’
Within the tenure-track structure, faculty mothers in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) study found coping strategies consistent with the concept of satisficing in relation to their selection of research topics, their selection of journals for publication, the level of scholarship they aspired to, the volume of research and publications they were willing to complete, their teaching and service obligations, and their desired “fame and fortune” (p. 61). One of Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s participants stated, “I’m striking a balance, but I’m realizing I have to adapt my visions of how I’ll work. . . . Maybe I won’t contribute the greatest in the way I wanted to. . . . But I think I’m willing to make that sacrifice” (2012, p. 61). For these women, this satisficing created a sense of balance from which they benefitted.

In summary, there are notable challenges and benefits for faculty mothers. Challenges include timing of becoming a parent (i.e., the biological clock vs. the tenure clock), attainment of tenure and promotion with children, and various work-family conflicts (including childcare options, faculty productivity, and difficult work environments). Benefits include lower levels of workload dissatisfaction, perspective, efficiency, and balance.

Queer Faculty Issues

A considerable research base exists around lesbian/gay/queer studies and LGBTQ individuals in the context of higher education, although most of the latter pertains to students. This literature review focuses on lesbian/gay/queer faculty members and issues relevant to them in the academy. In addition to the traditional stresses of women’s faculty life, lesbian faculty members may face oppression and discrimination related to their sexual orientation and identities as lesbians (Talburt, 2002). According to Talburt, “Historically, lesbians have suffered discrimination in hiring procedures and tenure and promotion reviews, exclusion from social and
professional networks, harassment, and intimidation” (2002, p. 418). This literature review focuses particularly on campus climate and the concern of outness in academia.

**Campus climate.** As Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) stated, “The study of workplace climate for LGBT faculty is important because they may be especially vulnerable to bias, discrimination, and retaliation in the academic workplace” (p. 88). Rankin’s (2005) research on campus climate, particularly for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, faculty, and staff, has been foundational. Unfortunately, LGBT identified individuals perceive a more hostile campus climate than do heterosexual individuals. Among the LGBT participants in her study, 27% of faculty reported having experienced harassment and many perceived the environment to be negative: “most faculty (73 percent) . . . described their campus climates for LGBT people as homophobic” (Rankin, 2005, p. 19). Overall, “forty-one percent of the respondents stated that their college or university did not thoroughly address issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity” (Rankin, 2005, p. 19).

Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) also found that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) individuals were more likely to report having experienced harassment, incidences of tokenism, and feeling less comfortable on campus than their heterosexual peers. Twenty-three percent of LGBQ respondents experienced harassment, whereas 12% of heterosexual respondents experienced harassment. Of those LGBQ respondents who experienced harassment, 83% believed the harassment was because of their sexual identity (Rankin et al., 2010). Furthermore, faculty members, in comparison to students and staff, specifically perceived a more hostile climate (Rankin et al., 2010). LGBQ faculty members felt significantly less comfortable with the campus climate (only 60% felt comfortable or very comfortable in comparison to 70% of LGBQ students and 73% of LGBQ staff) and their
department climate (only 76% felt comfortable or very comfortable in comparison to 83% of LGBQ staff) and they observed and experienced harassment (60%) more so than their student (54%) and staff (54%) counterparts (Rankin et al., 2010).

Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) studied the climate specifically for LGBT faculty in science and engineering fields. They found that, for the most part, lesbian and gay faculty members felt that their sexual orientation was invisible, reported having experienced hostility, and perceived that they were excluded from professional networks. In contrast, they had rare, but important positive experiences that mitigated some of this negativity, including university benefits that included their partners, and interacting with their partners’ work environments in positive ways.

In response to faculty climate data such as these, Rankin (2005) suggested that colleges and universities must transform institutions of higher education because of the problems facing LGBT students, faculty, and staff. This transformation should result from replacing heterosexism with “assumptions of diverse sexualities and relationships, [which should then] govern the design and implementation of all institutional activities, programs, and services” (Rankin, 2005, p. 22).

Policies are one manifestation of campus climate and a point for potential institutional transformation. According to Vaccaro (2012), “For faculty, the presence of inclusive policies did not necessarily make the climate warm” (p. 439). Unfortunately, as one of Vaccaro’s participants noted, although nondiscrimination clauses may be in effect, “There is an awful [reality]—even if people can’t fire you for being gay, they can make your life difficult in less tangible ways” (2012, p. 439). In a truly reformed institution, the question of whether LGBT faculty members can or should be out on the job (which I address in the following section) would likely not be as prevalent as research (e.g., Vaccaro, 2012) indicates it is currently.
**Outness in academia.** Lesbian faculty members have reported their perception that they encounter more obstacles than their heterosexual counterparts, including their concern over whether they can and should be out in their jobs (Reinert, 2011). Stuck (1997) identified themes across and between the narrative stories of 32 lesbians who worked in academia, including the complexity of being out; for the women who shared their stories, “the degree of, and the paths to, outness varied” (p. 212). Each woman’s outness was further complicated if it differed from the degree of her partner’s outness (Stuck, 1997). This literature review will focus on outness in hiring, teaching, scholarship, and promotion and tenure for lesbian faculty members.

**Outness in the hiring process.** Tierney (1997) shed light on “the academic closet” (p. 93), particularly considering the hiring process. Some lesbian and gay male faculty members believed that if their sexual orientation were apparent in the hiring process, it would result in being rejected rather than hired (Tierney, 1997). In Stuck’s (1997) research, some women were convinced that their job rejections were directly “due to their lesbianism” (p. 214), while “a number of others were completely out and obtained positions” (p. 214). It is clear that this experience varies, likely dependent on individual institutional cultures and individual applicants’ characteristics.

**Outness in the classroom.** As Stuck (1997) revealed,

For many, it is in the classroom that some of the biggest challenges to [lesbian faculty members’] existence – to their very being – manifest themselves, either in the specifics of dealing with homophobic writing, or worries about perceived bias, or in the more global and abstract sense of responsibility felt by these women to be honest, to be complete human beings. (p. 217)
Homophobic student writing and comments were identified as significant difficulties for faculty members who were out in the classroom (Stuck, 1997; Vaccaro, 2012).

In contrast, for some, there are identifiable benefits of being out in the classroom. Participants in Orlov and Allen’s (2014) study revealed that they believed “their teaching performance was enhanced by being out in their classrooms, stemming largely from what can be encapsulated in one term: *freedom*” (p. 1033, italics in original). They felt their teaching benefitted from the lack of fear about filtering their comments and stories to connect course material to personal life in ways that would have had to render their sexual orientation invisible. Furthermore, participants felt that their personal and disciplinary (e.g., social work, psychology) values were congruent and that their outness in the classroom represented their commitment to personal authenticity. Participants felt that their outness served as role modeling for students and additionally supported student learning in the classroom through the “contagious nature of openness, honesty, and authenticity” (Orlov & Allen, 2014, p. 1038).

These findings were echoed by participants in Khayatt’s (1997) research. Khayatt presented several benefits from being out in the classroom, including that gay and lesbian students would benefit from learning from professors like themselves; that it role-models for others who want to be out; that it “unsettles the heterosexism of an institution” (1997, p. 133) and actively avoids institutional homophobia; and, that “coming out is ‘putting one’s body on the line,’ which is a prerequisite for political action” (1997, p. 133), which was important for participants. McNaron’s research revealed that the majority of lesbian and gay faculty members believed their sexual orientation influenced their teaching in positive ways, including that they were more likely to include other minoritized groups, topics, authors, and resources in their teaching due to their “heightened awareness of and sensitivity to other oppressed groups,
knowledge of who has been historically suppressed, ignored, or trivialized by academic communities and the larger culture” (1997, p. 28).

**Outness in scholarship.** In analyzing participants’ stories regarding their research, particularly what they included in their curriculum vitae, Stuck identified “a major dilemma: Risk the rewards of academia, or risk loss of identity” (1997, p. 215). Beyond simply which research faculty members should include on their vitae, Talburt stated, “Those whose scholarship centers on gay and lesbian topics have had their work devalued or have lost access to prestigious research grants and peer-reviewed journals” (2002, pp. 418-419). Particularly for faculty members who use queer theory as the foundation for their work, Vaccaro discovered that their perception of a “lack of support for their teaching and scholarship, combined with a heterosexist curriculum” (2012, p. 439), negatively affected their perception of campus climate.

Not all LGB faculty members had these experiences. McNaron (1997) noted that some faculty members’ research productivity increased because of the rise of queer studies and who felt as though their research had been rejuvenated.

**Outness in promotion and tenure processes.** Promotion and tenure stems from the aforementioned academia-related topics, so it is naturally influenced by the way faculty members did and did not perceive support for their identities prior to this process. Talburt (2002) stated, “Many lesbian faculty members remain “closeted” until receiving tenure, if not afterward as well, to maintain credibility with colleagues and students and to protect their opportunities for advancement” (pp. 418-419). Similarly, Tierney (1997) found that lesbian and gay male faculty members believed their sexual orientation was a factor that would lead to their likely being rejected for promotion. Vaccaro’s participants worried that if students evaluated them negatively
based on their identities as out teachers, it might “influence tenure and promotion decisions” (2012, p. 438).

In summary, LGBTQ faculty members experienced less comfort with the overall campus climate and specific departmental climate in addition to some faculty members experiencing and witnessing more harassment than other faculty, staff, and students. LGBTQ faculty members also must consider to what (if any) degree to be out in terms of the hiring process, classroom, scholarship, and promotion and tenure processes. Unfortunately, as McNaron noted, “the very existence of colleagues with long and distinguished careers who find it convenient, wise, or necessary to keep their sexual identities separate from their academic lives may point to an absence of significant change in their campus environments” (1997, p. 24).

**Lesbian Parenting Issues**

The scholarly literature about lesbian parenting issues is limited; the empirical literature is even more so. As noted earlier, the existing literature on lesbian mothers seems primarily focused on choices about family planning, the experiences of the children of lesbian mothers, and legal issues. Ryan-Flood (2009) noted that the largest body of lesbian parenting literature focuses on the children. Additionally, though there are numerous essays about the personal experiences of individual lesbian mothers, I do not believe those sources belong in this literature review. Rather, the focus of this literature review is to provide a brief context, and then to address these women’s decisions to become and experiences as lesbian parents (including an overview of the National Lesbian Family Study).

Moore and Stambolis-Ruhstorfer (2013) estimated that “currently there are approximately 125,000 same-sex couples raising nearly 220,000 children” (p. 494). According
to the 2010 US Census and the 2010 American Community Survey, about one in four same-sex partner couples reported having children (Lofquist, 2011).

Stein (1997) described the contentious history around lesbian motherhood. Stein noted, “Early second-wave feminists viewed women’s mothering as contributing to male domination” (1997, p. 132) and that women should “free themselves from compulsory motherhood” (p. 132). However, as some lesbians chose to have children, there was internal conflict to resolve their identities as lesbian and mother with one another. For some, the identities seemed contradictory, while for others, the identities were not mutually exclusive. It was during the 1970s that the lesbian baby boom began (Weston, 1993). During this time, many out lesbians began having children outside of heterosexual relationships; specifically, “women between the ages of thirty and forty-five seemed to predominate among those bearing, adopting, coparenting, or otherwise incorporating children into their lives” (Weston, 1993, p. 157). Weston (1993) stated, “Babies conceived after a woman has come out demand a reconciliation of a non-procreative lesbian identity with procreative practice” (p. 159).

The majority of lesbians in Mezey’s (2008) research associated lesbian motherhood with positive attributes, including “that lesbian mothers are emotionally strong, are changing the definition of motherhood in positive ways, have flexible roles within families, and teach their children to be open-minded to difference in general” (p. 80). According to Goldberg (2010), Lesbian- and gay-parent families challenge and expose traditional conceptualizations of family. . . . [and] thus, from a social constructionist standpoint, [they] . . . do not represent the disintegration of family but, rather, constitute new and valid family forms. (p. 9)
Lesbian and gay parents effectively remove the heteronormative boundaries of heterosexuality and biology from the family structure (Goldberg, 2010).

**Decisions to become parents.** Many factors influence lesbian and gay men’s decisions regarding becoming parents, including internalized homophobia, their partner’s or partners’ desires regarding parenthood, location and resources, and other turning points (Goldberg, 2010). By the very nature of their relationships, lesbians who want to have children in the context of their relationship with another woman must be intentional in order to become mothers (Mezey, 2008; Stacey, 1996). From Mezey’s (2008) research, the lesbian women who chose to become parents identified that several factors, including “beliefs about motherhood, access to lesbian support networks, intimate partners, and work” (p. 66), were ultimately considered as well as the ways in which each of those considerations might be affected by their decision.

Once the decision to become a parent has been made, lesbians and gay men must consider how they will achieve their desire; they may choose insemination, adoption, engaging in heterosexual sex, surrogacy, and/or co-parenting (Goldberg, 2010). Finances greatly affect the options available at this point, as fertility treatments are not automatically covered by health insurance, and neither fertility treatment nor adoption is necessarily inexpensive.

**Legal issues for queer parents.** Although the June, 2015 Supreme Court of the United States ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* granted same-sex marriage as a fundamental constitutional right, other same-sex family issues are still problematic for some queer parents and queer people who would like to become parents. Because family law is primarily governed by states rather than the federal government, legal issues for queer parents are varied and complex (Shapiro, 2012). Shapiro (2012) noted,
From a legal perspective, the process by which LGBT adults become parents (adoption or assisted reproduction) is critical. During this process one or both adults (if there are two adults) may gain recognition as a legal parent. Different legal outcomes will result as a function of both on [sic] the process used and the law of the relevant states. (p. 292)

Although same-sex joint and second-parent adoption became legal following the Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) decision, Mississippi does not currently grant joint same-sex adoption “pending the appeal of a federal court decision that the law violates the Constitution” (Family Equality Council, 2016, para. 2). For second-parent adoption, the availability for parents to petition for second-parent adoption depends on whether the parents are legally married (those who are not in a legally recognized relationship can only petition for second-parent adoption in 15 states as well as the District of Columbia [D.C.]). Only seven states actively restrict discrimination against LGBT parents in fostering, whereas 41 states and D.C. have made no laws about LGBT foster parenting, and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the state of Nebraska actively restrict LGBT parents from fostering (Family Equality Council, 2016).

Experiences as parents. Johnson (2012) synthesized research from the 1970s through the 1990s in stating that “lesbian mothers appear to be as or more effective than heterosexual parents in establishing functional households, adult parenting relationships, and performing as parents to raise well-adjusted and highly functional children and adolescents” (p. 47). More recent research (e.g., Goldberg, 2006; Mezey, 2008) indicates that lesbian parents have shifting support systems, fear for their children in terms of harassment and homophobia, and have egalitarian relationships with their partners.
After lesbians and gay men have become parents (or begin the process of becoming parents), they may experience changes in support from their family members, ranging from a lack of support to increased support through the transition (Goldberg, 2006). Additionally, they may experience the loss of some friendships with childless friends and the initiation of new friendships with other parents (Lewin, 1993).

In addition to changing support networks, lesbian mothers began to think about harassment and homophobia in different contexts. Lesbian mothers fear that their children will be victims of harassment and homophobia because of their mothers’ identities (Gartrell et al., 2000; Goldberg, 2010; van Dam, 2004). Participants in Goldberg’s (2010) study indicated their commitment to minimizing this exposure to harassment and homophobia. One way this might occur is through the exposure of their children to other children of LGBT parents, as the lesbian/bi/queer women in Luce’s (2010) study reported that they intended to do.

Part of lesbian mothers’ support comes from their partners. One of the participants in Mezey’s (2008) study felt that, “lesbians are able to create a more equitable division of labor than heterosexual couples because there are no preconceived notions of what that division of labor should be” (p. 82). This egalitarian view of lesbian parenting is prevalent in the literature (e.g., Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2004; Dunne, 1997; Goldberg, 2010; Ryan-Flood, 2009). Goldberg (2010) noted that lesbian and gay parents have “the potential for greater equality with regard to dividing up paid work and family work” (p. 178). Dunne (1997) found this egalitarian approach to parenting after employing time-diary research methods.

van Dam (2004) differentiated between lesbian families and lesbian step-families. Lesbian families were formed by two women who had children together after the formation of their relationship. Lesbian step-families were formed by two women, one or both of whom had a
child or children prior to the formation of their relationship. Although van Dam’s participants reported receiving support from grandparents, lesbian step-families perceived less support than their lesbian family counterparts did; van Dam hypothesized this was due to their step-family status. In general, the lesbian step-families “were more likely to have older children, more children, and less income” (van Dam, 2004, p. 474) than their lesbian family counterparts.

**The National Lesbian Family Study.** At present, the National Lesbian Family Study appears to be the most significant research on lesbian families in the United States. There were 84 lesbian families (including 17 couples and 14 single mothers) who participated in the first set of interviews; by the fourth interviews, the researchers reported a 93% retention rate. According to Gartrell et al. (1999), “The USA National Lesbian Family Study (NLFS) was initiated in 1986 to provide prospective, descriptive, longitudinal data on the first wave of planned lesbian families with children conceived through [donor insemination]” (Gartrell et al., 2006). Gartrell et al. conducted longitudinal research with lesbians at multiple points of their child(ren)’s development: preconception, toddler age, five years of age, and ten years of age.

In the interviews with mothers of toddlers, the benefits of “sharing the joys and responsibilities” (Gartrell et al., 1999, p. 365) were also accompanied by “feelings of jealousy and competitiveness around bonding and child-rearing issues” (Gartrell et al., 1999, p. 365). In addition to the shared joy and responsibility of childrearing, participants identified improved relationships with the mothers’ own parents (van Dam’s [2004] research supports this finding of feeling supported by the child(ren)’s grandparents). Eleven percent of the couples had divorced or broken up since the first interview (when they were planning to get pregnant). For the most part, couples shared parenting responsibilities and balanced the negative impact on work schedules by reducing work hours, alternating work schedules, or utilizing childcare services.
Forty-two percent of the mothers felt excluded from lesbian communities. Some of the mothers remarked that their sons were excluded from events within the community, because the events were for women and girls only. Additionally, one woman noted, “I know a lot of lesbians think we’re having kids because we want to pass as straight” (Gartrell et al., 1999, p. 367); this was also noted as a source of perceived discrimination.

At the point of the third interviews, lesbian parents of five-year-olds “were uniformly enthusiastic about participating in their child’s growth” (p. 544). By the time the children were five-years-old, nearly one-third of the lesbian couples had gotten divorced (Gartrell et al., 2000). Of the couples still together, approximately one-third “felt that having a child had strengthened their relationship” (Gartrell et al., 2000, p. 545). Nearly all of the couples who were still together acknowledged that they had less time and energy for their partner because of having children (Gartrell et al., 2000). In terms of support systems, at this point, the lesbian families’ supports included neighbors and other parents; “social outings involved other lesbian or gay families 76% of the time” (Gartrell et al., 2000, p. 545). Eighty-seven percent of the mothers “felt that the lesbian community played an important role in their child’s life” (p. 545).

During the set of fourth interviews, about half (51%) reported that they “satisfactorily managed career and motherhood responsibilities, 39 percent felt they never had enough time for either. . . Twelve percent of mothers reported less career advancement due to the choice to prioritize parenting” (Gartrell et al., 2006, p. 181). At this point, 48% percent of the original couples had divorced or broken up (Gartrell et al., 2006). Notably, in terms of support systems, compared to the 76% at the third interview, “only 13 percent reported that they socialized mainly with lesbigay families” (Gartrell et al., 2006, p. 183). At this point, lesbian parents were still primarily enthusiastic about parenting.
In synthesizing the results of the National Lesbian Family Study over time, results show that mothers’ social networks increased and expanded over time. Mothers made choices to tone down their lesbian visibility as their children aged in order to avoid their children experiencing homophobia. Some families’ structures changed to include step family members (as mothers may have separated and gotten involved in new relationships in which the new partner already had a child[ren] or in which they choose to have a child[ren] together). Mothers remained engaged in family, occupational, and domestic roles due to the egalitarian nature of their relationship. “Some co-mothers continued to experience jealousy and competitiveness around bonding with the . . . child” (Gartrell et al, 2006, p. 188). Mothers had begun to engage in personal interests more over time (rather than focusing more exclusively on family). Additionally, mothers experienced more physical and mental health problems over time. Lastly, given the separation statistics, single parenting increased over time.

Conclusions

In examining this literature together, I wonder how similar the experiences of working mothers, faculty mothers, lesbian faculty members, and lesbian mothers will be to the experiences of participants in this study. These bodies of literature each address challenges and difficult decisions unique to their populations. Both faculty mothers and lesbian mothers have challenges regarding timing; faculty mothers struggle with decisions around whether to have children before, during, or after tenure and promotion processes, while lesbian mothers struggle with how and when to become parents. Queer faculty members and lesbian mothers must make decisions around being out and the repercussions of that choice on their careers and children.

While there are a few commonalities across the literatures, the reviewed literature indicated the various populations find benefits from very different sources. Faculty mothers
benefit from perspective-taking, efficiency, balance, and lower levels of dissatisfaction with their workload. Queer faculty members who are professionally “out” benefit from a sense of role-modeling and authenticity. Lastly, lesbian mothers benefit from increased support systems over time and egalitarian relationships with their partners. These benefits certainly could serve as resources, including “skills and perspectives, psychological and physical resources, social-capital resources, flexibility, and material resources” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80), for queer faculty mothers’ other roles and experiences.

The reviewed literature leaves some concepts unaddressed. Although the experiences of working mothers, faculty mothers, lesbian faculty members, and lesbian mothers include the aforementioned challenges, new research should investigate whether those challenges are counterbalanced by the benefits noted in the literature. Furthermore, the experienced benefits these roles may have on the other roles may counteract the cumulative disadvantage noted by Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) participants as in Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) work-family enrichment research. These gaps in the current literature justify this study.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I review the research questions, present my values and assumptions as a researcher, and explain the methodology of this study. I additionally describe the data analysis and trustworthiness techniques and highlight the study’s limitations.

Research Questions

The overarching question guiding this study was “What are the experiences of queer faculty mothers who simultaneously navigate motherhood and academia?” Four sub-questions informed this study.

1. How has parenting influenced the faculty life (i.e., teaching, research, service) of queer faculty mothers who have raised child(ren) prior to attaining tenure?
2. How do queer faculty mothers define success (as faculty members and as mothers)?
3. From whom/where do queer faculty mothers draw support?
4. What are their experiences of and responses to heteronormativity within the academy?

Paradigmatic Framework

It is important for researchers to consider their ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions as they influence how researchers form and answer their research questions (Creswell, 2013). Ontological assumptions concern “the nature or structure of reality or existence” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 9). Epistemological assumptions are philosophical and relate to the constitution of knowledge (Jones et al., 2014). Axiological assumptions are unveiled through the acknowledgement and incorporation of personal values (Creswell, 2013). In this section, I first present my perspectives on the way I believe people construct reality, knowledge, and the influence of personal values. I then connect my perspectives to the paradigms with which my research aligns.
Personal Perspectives

Like many researchers, I believe that people construct realities through connections (i.e., interactions, relationships, experiences) with others. Through these connections and interactions, people construct knowledge; this knowledge is sometimes shared between people with common experiences (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014). I also believe it is important to understand and make meaning of those connections and realities through the consideration of privilege, oppression, and social identities. Through the research process, problematic systems of oppression and control can be unveiled and changed (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, I believe that in acknowledging values and positionality, the researcher makes the research process more meaningful and honest.

Paradigmatic Alignment

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), the tenets of social constructivism are “that reality is socially constructed, that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings” (p. 29). It is through the research process that reality becomes known through its co-construction between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013) and the co-construction of the meanings of participants’ experiences are discovered (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). “The only way to achieve this understanding is for the researcher to become involved in the reality of the participants and to interact with them in meaningful ways” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 29). The goal of social constructivist research is not to reduce these meanings to one reality but rather to acknowledge that multiple realities exist simultaneously (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, social constructivist researchers acknowledge values in the research process, rather than attempting to remain “value-free” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 28).
The framework of this study is social constructivist in that findings were co-constructed with participants and in that I remained cognizant of the influence of participants’ individual experiences in the construction of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, I came in to this research project with my own views and values about the topic. Rather than denying those, I acknowledged them and challenged myself to reflect on the ways they shaped and influenced my process. I address some of these values in the next section.

The framework of this study also honors a queer perspective in that I acknowledge that reality is constructed through struggles related to identity (including oppression based on gender and sexual orientation) and that “reality is known through the study of social structures, freedom and oppression, power, and control” (Creswell, 2013, p. 37). In this study, I considered, and asked participants to consider, how experiences of navigating queerness, motherhood, and academia might be influenced by the intersections of each of those experiences. This included challenging and deconstructing binary constructions of “knowledge” (my own and participants’) regarding sexuality, gender, and family as they arose. This challenge and deconstruction is part of the co-constructed research process, and I was mindful not to dismiss or discredit participants’ constructions of reality, but rather come to new understandings together.

**Researcher’s Values and Assumptions**

I value connectedness and believe it is through our connections with others, and our interactions and experiences therein, that we make meaning. This is “reality.” Because we construct reality through these unique relationships and experiences, there are multiple realities. One person’s reality does not negate another person’s reality. In these ways, my beliefs are reflective of social constructivism (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014).
**Researcher positionality.** Creswell (2013) considered reflexivity two-fold: first, the researcher should “[talk] about his or her experiences with the phenomenon being explored” (p. 216) and, second, should “discuss how these past experiences shape the researcher’s interpretation of the phenomenon” (p. 216). The latter reflexivity process (focusing on my contextual interpretation) occurred primarily during data analysis, as I interpreted participants’ experiences with faculty parenting. However, the first reflexivity process is one that I engaged in from the onset of this study, beginning with an initial reflection prior to engaging in data collection and continuing throughout the analysis process in my researcher journal and in conversations with my peer debriefers and committee members.

Dowling (2008) noted four types of reflexivity: bracketing assumptions, epistemological reflexivity (concerning the methodological decision-making and findings), reflexivity on contextual influences (i.e., political, social, etc.), and reciprocal reflexivity. I believe the facets of reflexivity according to Creswell (2013) and Dowling (2008) should be ongoing throughout the research process.

Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) noted the importance of considering one’s own social identities within the research process. Additionally, Wolf-Wendel (2013) discussed the challenges and benefits of conducting *me-search* in higher education research. Certainly, I am aware that my social identities and career aspirations have formed some of my scholarly interests. Of my varied social identities, several are most applicable to my interest in this particular study. I identify as a queer mother. My ex-husband and I have two sets of biological twin children who are now 5- and 9-years-old. My identity as a mother has been interwoven with my identity as a graduate student. I gave birth to my first set of twins halfway through my master’s studies, and my second set of twins celebrated their first birthday the week before I
began my doctoral studies. I came to realize my sexual orientation more fully at the onset of my doctoral studies and have subsequently come to redefine my family structure. My wife and I were married in the last year and she, my ex-husband, and I parent our children together. Additionally, one of my long-term career aspirations is to become a tenure-track faculty member. 

I believe these identities have had benefits as well as challenges throughout this research process. Sharing these identities might have established an initial level of rapport with participants that may not otherwise have existed if I did not hold them. I hope participants understood that this research study is compelling and important to me. However, I have had to remain vigilant about avoiding assumptions; I could not assume that I understood participants’ experiences based on limited knowledge.

**Researcher assumptions.** My own assumptions about this research were based in my exposure to and interactions with faculty parents, queer parents, queer faculty members, and queer faculty parents as well as my own experience as a mother. My selection of work-family enrichment theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) reflects my belief that work and family can be enriched by one another.

In my personal experience as a doctoral student parent, I believe there have been times that my roles as parent and as student/scholar/teaching assistant were in conflict. For example, there were times that I wanted to fully immerse myself in one role but had too many things to accomplish in the other and therefore felt some resentment for that role. However, at other times, I believe they enhanced one another. I believe that my involvement in something professionally (in which I make some sort of contribution to scholarship and the learning of future practitioners) gives me a sense of accomplishment that counteracts the resentment that sometimes occurs (e.g., when I would rather be playing with my children than researching and
writing for hours at a time). Furthermore, my professional and educational involvement serves as good role modeling for my children.

I have role-model faculty parents who seem (at least from my vantage point) to balance their roles as parent, faculty member, partner, and even still have time for volunteer involvement and leadership roles. I also realize that because I hold these identities, I may have been biased toward looking for “evidence” that they can occur in tandem and enhance one another. I continued to reflect on my values and assumptions throughout the research process.

**Theoretical Framework**

Clandinin and Connolly (2000) critiqued formalistic use and placement of theory within narrative research. However, although I intended to consider their cautions as I engaged in this research process, I did not follow their suggestion that an a priori theoretical framework and literature review are unnecessary. There are narrative researchers who used a formal theoretical framework and literature review in their research (e.g., Abes & Jones, 2004; Jones, Segar, & Gasiorski, 2008). I incorporated work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) as the theoretical framework for this study. This theoretical framework was a lens through which I analyze the data; however, I did not force it upon the data in places it was not an appropriate fit.

In Chapter II, I explained work-family enrichment theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), which asserts that work roles can enhance the performance and affect of family roles and vice versa. This enrichment occurs through the generation of resources (i.e., “skills and perspectives, psychological and physical resources, social-capital resources, flexibility, and material resources” [Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80]) that benefit not just the role in which they were generated, but also the other role, via direct transfer or affective transfer.
Narrative Methodology

Clandinin and Connolly (2000) asserted that narrative is the best methodology through which to study experience. They believed “life . . . is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 17). Their consideration of contextual stories and the meaning making therein drew them in to narrative research. They further explained, “In the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living . . ., telling . . ., retelling . . ., and reliving a life story” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 71). It is through the retelling and reliving that researchers and participants can make meaning of their life stories, particularly within a narrative methodological framework.

Creswell (2013) noted, “Narrative stories tell of individual experiences, and they may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves” (p. 71, italics in original). Reflective of a social constructivist qualitative approach, narrative inquiry “is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interactions with milieus” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 20). Furthermore, Suárez-Ortega (2012) noted, “Adopting [a narrative] approach means considering the participant’ [sic] subjective consciousness, emphasizing the role of meanings, reflexive knowledge, and words (“voice”) in shaping one’s own experience” (p. 190).

Like Clandinin and Connolly, I am drawn toward peoples’ contextual stories and meaning making; this is why I chose narrative methodology for this study. Specifically, I was interested in the individual experiences of queer faculty mothers and how they make meaning of their experiences. For this qualitative study of the ways in which queer-identified faculty mothers make meaning of navigating motherhood and academia, I believe a narrative
methodology best aligned with my values and assumptions, paradigmatic framework, and the
texture of my questions. Furthermore, the theoretical framework was beneficial as participants
and I made meaning, together, of their life stories about queer motherhood and academia.

Narrative Considerations

Clandinin and Connolly (2000) discussed a “metaphorical three-dimensional narrative
inquiry space” (p. 50, italics in original), which is constructed through the consideration of
interaction, continuity, and situation. Interactions are considered in both personal and social
contexts. Continuity concerns temporality: past, present, and future. Lastly, the situational
consideration addresses place(s) and that particular context for the research. In this narrative
study, I have considered these contexts in constructing the interview protocol and in data
analysis.

Additionally, Clandinin and Connolly (2000) noted several potential interrelated tensions
and their implications within narrative research: temporality, people, action, certainty, and
context. The narrative researcher must consider each of these tensions throughout the process. I
have considered these tensions in the interview protocol and my plans for data analysis and
presentation.

Temporality. The temporality of participants’ narratives cannot be ignored in the
research process; “any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied
future” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 29). Just as participants’ experiences have personal
temporal implications (i.e., the individual’s past, present, and future), they are located in a
broader concept of time that should be considered in data analysis. Over time, the meaning of an
experience may change. The tension comes “between seeing things in time versus seeing things
as they are” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 30); essentially, the researcher must remember that events happen in series of moments (i.e., time) rather than as an isolated moment.

**People.** Just as time is inconstant, people are in a continual state of change. Participants’ processing and meaning making are of central importance to narrative research. Clandinin and Connolly (2000) noted, “It is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process” (p. 30); therefore, the researcher must remember the personal perspective of the participant’s story.

**Action.** A particular action without consideration of the narrative context is not meaningful. The analysis of one point of action cannot be considered in isolation from the broader narrative. As Clandinin and Connolly (2000) stated, “In narrative thinking . . . there is an interpretive pathway between action and meaning mapped out in terms of narrative histories” (p. 31). For this reason, it is important to consider that actions are not isolated from other actions.

**Certainty.** Certainty is not something to be attained through narrative research; rather the researcher tentatively presents interpretations of participants’ narratives, knowing there are other possible explanations (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). Clandinin and Connolly (2000) stated, “The attitude in a narrative perspective is one of doing ‘one’s best’ under the circumstance” (p. 31).

**Context.** Lastly, “context is necessary for making sense of any person, event, or thing” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 32). Without the consideration of context, the narrative loses its meaning. The narrative researcher must remain ever cognizant of the context of participants’ experiences.
Multiple Case Narrative

In multiple case narrative methodology, the researcher includes numerous participants, each of whom shares her own case narrative (Shkedi, 2005). The goal of multiple case narrative research “is to clarify the understanding of the participants’ world as they emerge from their stories” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 42). From in-depth interviews with each participant, the researcher can provide a “descriptive and explanatory picture [that is] very broad as well as deep” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 37). In this research, the researcher must balance empathy for and involvement with the participants with the appropriate degree of distance and critical thinking (Shkedi, 2005).

“[Critical thinking] is necessary to understand others’ perspectives as they see them, to how they see others, to identify their problems and concerns, and to decode their symbolic discourse and behavior” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 47, italics in original).

In constructing the narratives in this study, I clarified my understanding of stories and experiences participants shared in their interviews by checking in with participants for verification. I was critical in considering whether someone who was reading the narrative without having had the benefit of talking with participants (as I had) would be able to understand participants’ perspectives, problems, and concerns. I made sure each narrative was as broad and deep as possible in an attempt to provide a “descriptive and explanatory picture” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 37).

Narrative Analysis

Suarez-Ortega’s (2012) conceptualization of narrative analysis aligns well with a queer perspective. She noted,

With narrative, we legitimate life the way it happens and, for this, the researcher must always add performance and analysis of the narrative considering the hegemonic culture
of the reference context, the norms, the values, and the hidden elements that are the signs
of identity of individual people and of groups. (Suarez-Ortega, 2012, p. 198)

I tried to keep this in mind as I constructed narratives and analyzed data. I considered the
dominant (i.e., heteronormative) culture (i.e., context, norms, and values) as it pertained to
participants’ narratives.

Atkinson and Delamont (2006) cautioned that qualitative researchers need to remain
vigilant in systematically analyzing narratives, rather than simply celebrating them without
reflection. Atkinson and Delamont (2006) reiterated Atkinson and Coffey’s (2002, as cited in
Atkinson & Delamont, 2006) assertion that “the research interview should be examined
analytically as a performative act, through which identities are enacted, actions are justified, and
recounted events are retrospectively constructed” (p. 167). Narratives are one form of
performative acts (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006). In this study, in interviews and in follow-up
communication, I clarified participants’ actions and meaning-making so that I could more
accurately represent their experiences and the meaning therein. At times, this involved asking a
participant how her perspective had changed over time and how she now made meaning of
events about which she had not considered for a length of time. This allowed me to focus and
present participants’ narratives in a more relevant and reflective way.

Atkinson and Delamont (2006) noted,

It is, we suggest, a vital corrective that narrative should be viewed as a form of social
action, with its indigenous, socially shared, forms of organization. Narratives should be
analyzed as a social phenomenon, not as the vehicle for personal or private experience.

(p. 170)
In this study, I did not analyze participants’ experiences as individuals’ personal or private experiences, but rather their experiences within the context of the time, place, and meaning of social events and phenomena. For example, in this research process, participants’ actions and reactions to the historical context were at times rather important (e.g., ProfMean’s stories regarding the social and political climate of the 1980s through the present).

Components of narrative analysis. Holley and Colyar (2012) defined the four components of narrative analysis: plot, point of view, authorial distance, and character. There are challenges involved in each component.

Plot. With regard to plot, Holley and Colyar (2012) addressed the challenge of emplotment: “how to cohesively merge multiple and sometimes disparate components of data into a compelling story” (p. 116). This restorying is the researcher’s biggest and most important challenge (Holley & Colyar, 2012), because “the plot serves as the logic for a text” (Colyar & Holley, 2010, p. 74). Elements of emplotment include person, tense, and chronology (Colyar & Holley, 2010).

In this study, I focused on the way I could best fit the pieces of each participant’s story to tell a compelling story for readers. I did this in my consideration of in what person, tense, and time-order the narratives should be written. As a group of narratives, I believe the participants’ stories are more compelling in first-person, present tense, and non-chronological order. An additional plot consideration was in my decision of what to entitle each narrative, as the title situates the message for each narrative.

As the result of data analysis, I determined an organizational structure that was logical for the narrative presentation and used that to develop sub-headings for the individual narratives (e.g., teaching, research, motherhood, identities in academia). There were a few cases where a
participant’s individual narrative did not include one of the headings because it was not a focus of her experience. Each of these decisions was key in my emplotment of participants’ narratives.

**Point of view.** Regarding point of view, Holley and Colyar (2012) discussed the challenge of making decisions about the presentation of data in a manner that brings to light the relevant details and perspective in order for the researcher (and the consumers of research) to make meaning. This challenge remains throughout the research process, from the early research design and methodological decisions through the data analysis and writing processes (Holley & Colyar, 2012).

In this study, I chose to write the narratives in participants’ first-person point of view as a way to prioritize the participants’ perspectives. Additionally, to represent the unique experiences of participants, I wrote individual narratives only and did not include an overall narrative. In part due to issues of confidentiality and also considering the presentation of meaningful data, I also chose not to include participant profiles as a focus of chapter IV.

Beyond voice (i.e., first person), I included only relevant details so that participants, readers, and I could best make meaning of the narratives. This consideration began in deciding on whom the study should focus, continued in formulating the interview protocol, and on through the presentation of narratives and analysis.

**Authorial distance.** Authorial distance refers to the researcher’s positionality within the research design, process, analysis, and writing (Holley & Colyar, 2012). Historically, there has been a push toward objective and neutral research in the social sciences, what Geertz (1988, as cited in Holley & Colyar, 2012) referred to as “author-evacuated” (p. 116) research and writing. However, “author-saturated” (Geertz, 1988, as cited in Holley & Colyar, 2012, p. 116) research, in which the author is clearly placed within the research in a manner that is appropriately
balanced with the focus on participants, “can be more credible and complex than those [studies] without a clear [author’s] signature” (p. 116).

Throughout this research process, I have considered my positionality and understood that this study is both author-saturated and author-evacuated. While the study itself is author-saturated in my positionality and my own meaning-making (e.g., Chapter VI), I have attempted to ensure that the narratives are author-evacuated to prioritize participants’ perspectives and experiences. I did this by checking in with participants for clarity on the meaning and focus of elements of their experiences so that their meaning-making, rather than my own, is the focus of the narratives.

**Characters.** Lastly, researchers are challenged in selecting characters who (and which) provide the context for the study (Holley & Colyar, 2012). Holley and Colyar (2012) noted, “Featured characters help to focus a research text; supporting characters populate stories and provide exploration into the complexities of human lives and relationships” (p. 117). This challenging issue pertains to both inclusion and exclusion of people, stories, and context in the study’s design and analysis.

In this study, I included only relevant characters (i.e., I did not include stories and people unrelated to the focus of the study). Furthermore, I focused the narratives to highlight central and non-central characters as they contributed to participants’ experiences. At times, this meant that I included characters, represented by people or stories, who were non-central to the research questions themselves but were key elements in situating the participants’ context (e.g., material related to Liz’s age, see Liz: STEM Trailblazer).
Methods

It is important to remember that qualitative research processes are dynamic. Therefore, throughout this process, flexibility was key. As such, I have reflected on the ways in which my understanding of this research project changed during the course of the study.

Before I began this study, I attained approval from the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) (see Appendix A for HSRB approval letter). Once I successfully defended my dissertation proposal and attained HSRB approval, I employed the following methods, focusing on the context for the study, participant selection and recruitment, and data collection and analysis.

Context for the Study

This multiple case narrative examined the way queer faculty mothers have experienced and made meaning of their roles as mothers and academics. The focal interest was on the participants rather than on an institution. Therefore, I recruited participants from various institutions across the United States. While institutional intricacies likely are relevant, the institutions in which participants work were far less important than the participants themselves in the consideration of participants’ personal experiences with work-family enrichment.

Participant Selection

Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) research made significant contributions and presented many implications for strengthening support for faculty mothers in higher education. However, of their 120 participants, only two identified as lesbians (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Additionally, many studies on faculty mothers have a focus more on early career faculty members; I focused on mothers who are later in their careers (post-tenure and promotion) so that we might gain new knowledge.
Therefore, participants for this study were faculty members who identified with the following social constructs: mother; lesbian, bisexual, or queer (i.e., the sexual orientations included in the initial call for participants); and tenured faculty member within a doctoral-granting institution of higher education. I set the following inclusion criteria: participants must have identified as lesbian, bisexual, or queer at the time of the study; must have been faculty mothers who had attained tenure and promotion (i.e., to associate or full professorship) at doctoral-granting universities (to limit the variability of institutional contexts); and have raised children prior to their achievement of tenure, as research (e.g., Crosby et al., 2004; Williams, 2004) indicates that parenting is a potential difficulty in tenure-attainment.

Participants had to be the residential parent of their child(ren) who was (were) 18 years-of-age or younger, whether shared or full residential custody, as research indicates that time spent in parenting and household tasks affects the way faculty mothers perceive their success in their faculty roles (e.g., Mason et al., 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). I included seven participants in the present study to have a variety of case narratives to present and analyze.

**Participant Recruitment**

I utilized faculty and higher education queer-related listservs (e.g., CSPTalk, ACPA: College Student Educators International’s Coalition for LGBT Awareness [ACPA CLGBTA]’s listserv), posted on faculty- and higher education queer-related websites (e.g., Queer Ph.D. Network on Facebook, the ACPA CLGBTA Facebook page) and parenting-related websites (e.g., non-biological mom network on Facebook, the Gay Parent Magazine Facebook page), and conducted reputational recruitment to identify potential participants (see Appendix B). When I received interest from potential participants, I responded by addressing any questions they may have asked and included a copy of the interview protocol (see Appendix C)) and informed
consent (see Appendix D) to help them determine whether they would like to be included in this study.

**Participant Demographics**

All participants were tenured faculty members (five associate professors and two full professors) at doctoral universities (four at universities in the highest research activity Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education category and three at universities in the higher research activity Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education category). Three participants’ areas of expertise were in education; two in liberal arts; one in a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) field; and one in a professional degree program. All participants identified as women and three as lesbian, two as lesbian/queer, one as queer, and one as gay. All participants identified as White; one participant additionally identified as Jewish, and none of the other participants identified an ethnicity, religion, or cultural context.

All participants were partnered, four of whom were legally married to their partners. Each participant’s partner also worked (although one participant’s partner had recently retired). Three participants’ jobs were also as faculty members, however none of the participants were partnered with other participants.

All participants were mothers prior to attaining tenure. Participants ranged in age from 33-years-old to 66-years-old. One participant was in her thirties, four participants were in their forties, one participant was in her fifties, and one participant was in her sixties. Three participants were biological mothers and four were adoptive mothers. Three of the adoptive mothers had second parent adoptions, two of whom were listed on their child(ren)’s birth
certificates. Four of the participants had two children and three participants had one child, one of whom has additionally had foster children placed in her care.

**Data Collection**

There are several facets of data collection. In this section, I address the structure, content, verification, ethical considerations, and emergent design of data collection for this study.

**Structure.** Interviews, observation, and document review are the three primary methods of data collection in multiple case narrative research (Shkedi, 2005). In this study I employed semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews lasting approximately 120 minutes (ranging from 100 to 140 minutes). One interview was conducted in person, one via Skype, one via FaceTime, and four over the phone. “In-depth interviews are conversations in which both participant/teller and listener/questioner – develop meaning together” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 61). This aligned well with my social constructivist framework. I intended to take as little of participants’ time as needed while still collecting the information necessary for this study; therefore, I collected data in one interview with a follow-up as needed (primarily via email; I conducted one additional phone interview lasting approximately 10 minutes with one participant). Each interview was digitally recorded.

**Content.** Shkedi (2005) noted that “In the narrative research approach, our interest is in the phenomenon as it is seen, told, described, and explained by the informants themselves” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 37). Therefore, narrative researchers employ first-order questions in their interview protocol and follow-up questions because of the centrality of the participant and the information they chose to share (Shkedi, 2005). First-order questions focus on participants’ “actual stories, descriptions, and explanations” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 37). Suarez-Ortega (2012) believed that it is at the first point of data collection that data analysis begins, in the content and
direction of the researcher’s follow-up questions; this “orient[s] the research” (p. 192). As my interview protocol was semi-structured, in any follow-up questions, I “[encouraged] respondents to explain their answers fully, rather than (for them or me) to rely on possible assumptions about shared meanings, understanding, or experiences” (kennedy-macfoy, 2012, p. 136). The avoidance of assumptions is essential in qualitative research; the verification of participants’ wording and meaning therein are of primary importance in avoiding researcher assumptions.

**Interview content.** I considered the literature, theoretical framework, paradigmatic framework, research questions, and methodology in constructing the interview protocol for this study. My interview protocol included the collection of demographic information including academic discipline, rank and tenure status, number and age of children, sexual orientation, gender identity, relationship status, age, and race/ethnicity.

In the formal interview, (see Appendix C), I began by asking if there were ways that participants’ experiences in the individual roles at the focus of this study (i.e., sexual orientation, parenting role, faculty role) had impacted their experiences in the other two roles. I asked follow-up questions to address differences in impact over time as well as the ways the roles may have supported or detracted from one another. These questions were designed to draw out participants’ experiences in the framework of work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) in the boundaries of temporality, people, action, certainty, and context (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). In answering this question, participants’ responses began to elucidate ways in which work-family enrichment occurred for participants.

Next, I asked specifically about how participants perceived their queer mother roles and experiences to have influenced their tenure and promotion processes. I also asked specifically about their use of work-life balance related policies (e.g., maternity or parental leave).
To further draw out participants’ experiences in different contexts, the next question addressed the messages they received about being queer faculty parents (with the probes of department chair or other supervisor, faculty peers, students, partners, family members, etc.). I additionally asked about participants’ perceptions of differential treatment as a possible contradiction to the work-family enrichment theory.

I then asked about participants’ sources of support in their roles (with a follow-up about support over time), as these relate directly to resources in the work-family enrichment theory. Next, I asked about the advantages of being queer faculty mothers, in the context of each experience and role separately. Lastly, I asked whether there was something the participant felt I should have asked that I did not and that they wanted to share.

Through each of these questions, I attempted to gain insight about participants’ experiences as queer faculty parents from different perspectives. I incorporated various aspects of narrative consideration throughout the protocol.

**Verification of data.** Once I transcribed digital interview recordings verbatim, I asked participants to verify their accuracy. At this point, participants were also asked to expand upon, redact, or change any information to more accurately reflect their experiences. After participants approved their interview transcripts, I constructed the individual narratives (see Narrative construction, p. 67). Once again, I asked participants to verify their accuracy and to expand upon, redact, or change any information to more accurately reflect their experiences.

**Data Analysis**

In this study, data analysis followed the narrative construction for each participant. Following participants’ transcript approval, I read all transcripts in their entirety and kept notes (journaling) during the data analysis process (Creswell, 2013). I used NVivo 10 to assist with
data organization throughout the data analysis process. Herein, I will detail first the narrative construction and subsequently address the formal data analysis.

**Narrative construction.** Following the guidelines for narrative research, I analyzed the data to reveal narrative themes: “the story they have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points or epiphanies” (Creswell, 2013, p. 189). The narrative approach is experience oriented, holistic, and co-constructive between the researcher and participants (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). My restorying focused specifically on the three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000) to highlight personal and contextual elements of the data (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). In this approach, the restructuring of the narrative is not as prescriptive as other approaches to narrative analysis (e.g., the problem-solution approach), but rather focuses on “describing individual experiences” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 344). In co-constructing participants’ narratives, I focused particularly on interaction, continuity, and situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and also remained cognizant of plot, point of view, authorial distance, and character (Holley & Colyar, 2012). This meant that I considered the personal and social contexts for participants’ experiences (and highlighted those that were relevant to participants’ work-family roles), the temporality of their experiences (and, in most cases, restoryed the narratives in chronological order), and the place settings of participants’ stories (and gave details about the place, where pertinent). Furthermore, I prioritized merging different components of participants’ stories into narrative plots (Holley and Colyar’s [2012] emplotment), considered how best to help readers of this research make meaning of participants’ stories by including relevant details (Holley and Colyar’s point of view), and included the “characters” with whom participants’ experiences were meaningful.
In considering my authorial distance, I remained cognizant of my positionality within the research. Perhaps most importantly, I focused on participants’ stories of critical incidents, which “made it possible to detect the points of change in people’s lives, the most meaningful aspects that they [told me about or narrated] and that have given meaning to their experiences” (Suarez-Ortega, 2012, p. 193). With these concepts in mind, I then developed the individual narratives, according to the aforementioned guidelines for narrative analysis. I reconstructed each participant’s data into a narrative form using the three-dimensional space approach (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000).

**Formal data analysis.** I analyzed data utilizing Creswell’s (2013) strategies for analyzing qualitative research: I “prepared and organized the data . . . reduced the data into themes . . . and finally [represented] the data” (p. 180). I coded participants’ narratives by specifically considering work-family enrichment aspects of roles, resources, and transfers of those resources (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). I also coded for additional themes as they emerged.

I triangulated the data (between and within interviews) “to understand more completely . . . and ultimately to put the whole [experience] into perspective” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 93) by focusing on consistencies and inconsistencies of coding within and between different transcripts. This triangulation supported my thematization of the data. Once the data were thematized, I grouped codes within hierarchical categories. Lastly, I connected the findings to the theoretical framework by considering Glesne and Peshkin’s (2006) suggestion for a guiding question in data analysis: “What, if anything, do these words say about my study” (p. 129). This helped me to “interpret the larger meaning of the [participants’] stor[ies]” (Creswell, 2013, p. 191) by grounding the study.
Trustworthiness

I followed guidelines for the four primary standards for trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Jones et al., 2014). To support credibility, I employed researcher reflexivity, triangulation of data, peer debriefing, and member checking from participants at multiple points to address findings and my interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Involving participants as much as possible in the verification of findings is key in enhancing trustworthiness (Butler-Kisber, 2010). To address transferability, I provided a thick description of the data (Jones et al., 2014); the more detail researchers provide, the more they bolster transferability. Finally, to address dependability and confirmability, I journaled and benefitted from peer debriefing as well as debriefing with my dissertation committee chair. Transparency and researcher reflexivity throughout the research process are beneficial, as they may be as close to reliability that qualitative researchers may get (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Member checking is key in establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I conducted transcript verification prior to restorying participants’ narratives. After constructing narratives, I again requested participants approval before moving on to further data analysis. When I reduced the data into themes and patterns, I began formal member checking (Creswell, 2013). I sent the narratives, themes, and patterns to participants individually (via email unless participants preferred another media of communication) and asked that they reviewed them and respond with their initial impressions of my data analysis. After this, I returned to the data analysis and made adjustments as needed. Finally, I sent a summary of conclusions to participants and asked them to share their feedback or concerns with me.
I also utilized peer debriefing as a means to identify gaps in my data analysis and narrative construction. Peer debriefing bolsters credibility as well as serving as an outlet for processing (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). A peer debriefer should be a noninvolved individual who helps “to ask the difficult questions that the inquirer might otherwise avoid . . . to explore methodological next steps with someone who has no axe to grind, and to provide a sympathetic listening point for personal catharsis” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 283).

My research benefitted from my having two peer debriefers. One was a doctoral candidate who also conducts qualitative research from a queer perspective. This individual aspired to be a faculty member, identified as genderqueer, was not currently a parent but hoped to have children, and has edited my previous writing in a way that has challenged me to consider other perspectives and voices. The second peer debriefer was a full-time practitioner and part-time faculty member who held her Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration. She conducted mixed methods research from a critical perspective. She identified as cisgender, queer and in a heterosexual relationship, has had three miscarriages, and hoped to carry a child to full-term soon. This individual and I have collaborated on numerous other research projects and have developed a relationship wherein I trusted her to challenge my thinking and assumptions. The peer debriefers read participants’ approved (and anonymized) transcripts, along with my coding and narrative thematic reductions and gave me their impressions of whether they saw alternative interpretations and experiences. One peer debriefer’s framework aligns closely with my conceptual framework (queering) and the other peer debriefer conducts critical but not specifically queer theoretical or conceptual research; together they challenged me to engage with the material in a more critical perspective.
Additionally, I had conversations with and considered feedback from my dissertation committee members to more meaningfully connect participants’ narratives with my data analysis and conclusions. As a whole, my committee’s areas of expertise are in social justice in higher education, critical theory, women’s and gender studies, LGBT issues, sexuality studies, disability studies, college diversity, professional preparation in student affairs, educational partnerships, community and organizational development, and South African higher education. Three committee members primarily conduct qualitative research and the fourth committee member conducts quantitative research and assessment.

**Ethical Considerations**

Jones et al. (2014) addressed a researcher’s ethical duty to do good rather than simply do no harm. Wiles (2012) noted the three foci of ethical qualitative research methods: informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and risk. Informed consent requires that participants have been educated about what to expect throughout the research process, along with their right to withdraw from the study at any point. The use of pseudonyms (for the participant, their university of employment, and any people to whom they refer during the telling of their stories) provides some protection for the participant in terms of confidentiality (Wiles, 2012); however, researchers cannot truly guarantee confidentiality. For this study, I asked participants to select a pseudonym; this pseudonym was tied to their legal name in only one excel spreadsheet that only I was able to access.

We are far more capable of protecting participants’ confidentiality by excluding overly identifying participant information and stories (Wiles, 2012). Because my research focuses on such a small subset of faculty members, any potentially identifying information that was not relevant to this study was not be used unless participants communicated with me that they
wanted the material to remain. Because aggregating demographic information in such a way that would highlight intersections of participants’ identities would be overly identifying, I presented combined demographic information for each demographic variable rather than presenting all demographic variables for each participant (see Participant Demographics section on p. 62).

Additionally, researchers have an ethical obligation to expose research participants to as little risk as possible (Wiles, 2012). Some of the risks may include being identified within the narrative product. By disaggregating the data I decreased the likelihood of a participant being identified, important when participants shared experiences or opinions that might have made her vulnerable to mistreatment within her professional role. I gave consideration to each of the aforementioned ethical issues throughout the research process. I have several ethical mentors, including members of my dissertation committee and peer debriefers, to whom I turned when dilemmas arose.

**Delimitations**

This study is limited to a specific group of queer-identifying academic mothers who have attained tenure and promotion at doctoral-granting institutions. Participants in this study each hailed from a different university and all participants who responded to the call for participants identified as White. Furthermore, as I was interested in the experiences and meaning-making of participants who have attained tenure and promotion, queer-identifying academic mothers who were in their early careers or who have not been successful in the tenure and promotion processes were not represented in this study. Therefore, there are several individual and institutional characteristics that are not generalizable within or beyond the participants of this study.
CHAPTER IV: PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

The purpose of this study was to learn about lesbian, bisexual, and queer faculty mothers’ experiences, particularly through the framework of work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Seven women shared their stories with me and we co-constructed their narratives through the restorying of their experiences. In this chapter, I share their stories. It is common for narrative dissertations to include profiles or mini-narratives for each participant. However, in the interest of maintaining participants’ confidentiality, I will not share a demographic-type profile for participants, but instead share what participants and I have agreed to be a meaningful representation of their experiences with as few identifying details possible.

Elizabeth: “I Love My Job, but I Love My Daughter More”

Being gay impacted my work in my first academic job because even though sexual orientation was identified as a protected group in the personnel clause, my mentor made a pass at me on my very first day of work. Actually, he made several passes at me. He wanted to meet me at a place that is very much like a Hooter’s – I didn’t know what the restaurant was like. So, this was inappropriate from the get-go. He was quite disturbed that I was not responding to his inappropriate advances, and then he noticed a ring on my finger. He kept asking, “Well, then. Who is he? Who is he?” Finally, after being asked so many times, I said, “Her name is . . .” He was so upset with what I said that he got up from the table. When he came back from the restroom, he told me that if I told anyone about my relationship with my daughter’s other mother, he would make sure that I lost my job and that it would go something like this: “Elizabeth is not a team player. She doesn’t know how to play nicely with others.” And even though I told him that sexual orientation was protected in the personnel clause and that I had
moved my entire family 2,000 miles, he said he didn’t care. He knew the language and what he needed to say to work against me and that was what he wanted to make happen.

I was devastated. At the time, I was living by myself in a state 2,000 miles away from my partner and our daughter. We were trying to sell our house. I called my partner (at the time, now my ex-partner) and I explained what had happened and that I feared for my job but that I felt so guilty because I was moving them and we weren’t even in the same state at the time.

The way that university was set up, you didn’t work only with people who were in your field of study. You worked with other people as well. I really liked that about that university. So, I made friends in other disciplines and became very close to some of them quickly. About a month and a half into my appointment there, a few of them knocked on my door. My family was still 2,000 miles away. There were about eight colleagues and they all piled into my office and one of them said, “Elizabeth, we would like to talk to you.” I said, “Oh my goodness. Did I do something?” And they said, “No, we’re going to call this an intervention.” I wondered, “Oh gosh, what did I do?” They laughed and said, “No, we’re just really worried about you because you’re here all by yourself. We know that you have a daughter 2,000 miles away and we know nothing else about you. How in the world are you functioning? Who is taking care of your daughter? Do you need help moving? How are you surviving?”

That was just a wonderful experience. But then it was overwhelming, because I felt like I couldn’t tell them or I would lose my job. So, I just said, “I can’t talk about it. I don’t want to lose my job” and I started to get all choked up and started to cry. They reassured me that I wouldn’t lose my job. I just told them what the person who was my mentor did. They told me he had gotten a student pregnant and had slept with several graduate students and how unethical he was and they said they would do everything they possibly could to protect me. That was the
first time in my life up until that point that I felt that I had a safe space with my friends; that I
could just be.

It wasn’t until I came to the university where I work now that I started the job being out. Not that I went around with a big rainbow flag, but the person who recruited me saw me at a
national conference where I presented. Afterward she came up to me and said, “You need to come work for us” and I said, “I do?” When I went for my on-campus interview, I didn’t come out to the dean at that time. He knew nothing about me, but he was so sensitive about the
language he used. He called me shortly after my interview to tell me that the university had passed a non-discrimination policy that included sexual orientation and also approved domestic-partner benefits. I couldn’t believe he actually called me to tell me that. He also flew my family out three times to look for housing. Never once did he blink an eye or question anything about my sexual orientation. It was an unbelievable experience.

It wasn’t until I was 40 that I actually came out and felt safe identifying as LGBTQ. The dean was great. And the person who recruited me was great. However, working at this university has not been the greatest experience. As people have come into our program, it has not been great. About five years ago, I had several students make derogatory comments about LGBTQ populations and one student actually threatened my life.

I hadn’t come out to my class, but my family was part of a campus panel about modern family structures. I assume the student who threatened me must have somehow learned about that panel. The student identified as Muslim and told me to my face and in email that I should be killed and in what way that should happen. When I told my program coordinator and director, they were so unsupportive. They told me they had discussed it and that I was on my own to handle it. The program coordinator said, “This is a lawsuit waiting to happen. We are not going
to touch this for religious purposes. We don’t want a religious lawsuit because he identifies as Muslim, so we’re not going to touch this one.”

I was untenured at the time, so I had to figure out what to do because there was an event coming up during which he would have been exposed to my family and I did not want to jeopardize their safety. I talked to a couple of my colleagues, including my union representative. Officially, I didn’t receive any support from the university. Some of my friends who were colleagues came to the event just to make sure everything would be ok. Thank goodness, nothing happened. That student ended up leaving the program.

But, to me, that was very eye-opening. I’ve also worked with colleagues (at my former and current university) who use terms like faggot and dyke and make horrible comments about people who identify as LGBTQ. My daughter believed people say those things to me because I pass as being straight. My hair was long and I wear makeup and I guess I don’t dress like the stereotypical-whatever-people-have-in-their-mind-of-what-it-means-to-look-gay, so I pass then for being straight.

Four of my students and I presented at a professional association’s conference and someone in the audience talked about his experience as a person of color and the hostile environment he faced with White students. He asked, “How do you navigate that as a faculty member?” And I said, “I can’t talk about issues of race, because as far as race is concerned, I’m a member of the dominant culture. However – now, the people behind me are graduate students, and they’re going to have a heart attack right now and I’m not even going to look at them – but I’m going to tell you something they don’t know about me. I’m going to tell you how I utilize what they think of me to help them be more accepting toward all people.” And so I came out
during that conference session. I said, “If my students knew that I was gay, if I announced that, they would never have given me a chance.”

The students’ jaws dropped. After the session, they said they were so embarrassed because I was right, they wouldn’t have accepted me. But, because they now knew me as a person and had worked with me for three years, it helped them understand all of me versus one aspect of me that they didn’t understand. They said they were ashamed that they would have chosen not to know me.

I tried to help them understand what a teachable moment that was. I said, “I want you to realize that I already knew this and that’s why I did what I did. However, there are people and aspects of your identities that you may not be able to quote-unquote pass for whatever the dominant culture is. So, I want you to think about all the people that you’ve missed out on knowing and possibly the lives that you’ve damaged because of the choices you’ve made to ostracize them or to engage in microagressions. That definitely can hurt children and families and community members and maybe even your own family members.” We had a wonderful conversation after that. I felt that I needed to come out during the presentation because the audience member needed my response, but otherwise, I don’t really come out to students.

If students want to read my work, then they know that I’m gay. I don’t hide my family. If they ask me questions related to the topic at hand, I’m more than happy to answer. Or, if my family is with me, I introduce them to students we see out in the community or at an event. I don’t hide. But I would definitely not say this has been some great journey where people embrace me because I am gay.

I think any time people experience some kind of challenge and are able to navigate through it and still have a strong sense of wellbeing, it helps not only deepen their understanding
of the world, but also helps make sense of the world. For me, I’m never going to do anything to jeopardize my daughter’s safety. I’ve learned through my family how to navigate prejudice in the environment I work and the communities in which I’ve lived. All those things helped me be stronger and to realize that no matter what comes my way, I can figure out how to navigate that. Those are the positives. I don’t know if that is just because one aspect of my identity is gay. I think navigating challenges can help to realize that one isn’t going to allow people to dictate or determine their destiny.

Teaching

When I talk with students, I use my daughter’s examples, her lived experiences (e.g., as a student of color, as an adopted child from another country, as the child of a gay woman), as examples in class. And I try to help people understand that I’m also a parent and a faculty member. Being a faculty member and knowing what should be going on in schools and then seeing your child experiencing something that is the exact opposite, how do you negotiate that? How do you make this happen for your child? What do you do? Do you cross this line? How do you navigate this? So, I share those stories with them. For many of the students, they’re shocked about what happens in schools. My daughter is very open and shares a lot with me. So, in turn, I ask her if I can share her stories. We read about it in the research, but when I can share things with them, it brings a human touch.

It seems to really help our students, because it isn’t just something they’ve read. Now this is someone they know. So, being a mother shapes how I teach, what I teach, what I share, and how I share it. I want my students to realize that they’re working not just with a child, but with the whole family. They have a responsibility. Being a mom helps me support their understanding that they have a moral responsibility to look out for their students.
I don’t know if being gay bears weight in what or how I teach, but I think being a member of certain marginalized populations and the intersectionality of my identity helps me stay focused on why I do what I do. When the subject of LGBTQ communities comes up, that is usually the most difficult group to discuss, because we are in a very conservative state and when you talk with people who identify as predominantly Christian, you’re going to come across more debates regarding why they don’t need to accept people who identify as LGBTQ based on their religion versus if you talk about race, which isn’t about religion. It is almost like they can say “we don’t want to accept these people because of this reason,” but if you talk about race or class, they don’t have a leg to stand on. So, that tends to be the most difficult marginalized population to have dialogue about.

But I do it. And I do it through a myriad of ways, just as I do with other marginalized groups. I think the more our students hear voices and meet people who are gay – the more they meet people, talk about it, see videos, engage in dialogue, reflect – the more comfortable they are. I don’t know why this is, but I have also noticed that the last two cohorts that I’ve worked with have probably been the most accepting of LGBTQ populations that I’ve ever experienced in all my years of higher education. And I was an adjunct at three different universities while I was an administrator before I got a tenure-track position and it was bad – really bad. But, in the last two years, they’ve been open to the point where I feel safe enough inviting them to my home.

Research

You have to decide when it is ok to actually engage in research regarding LGBTQ communities, because assumptions can be made that “Oh, you are gay and that’s why you do this” versus genuinely being interested in specific marginalized populations. I’ve had to navigate that. At my former university, my director made it very clear. He called my lines of inquiry
“lines of bullshit.” He said, “Nobody is interested in this bullshit.” I tried to help him understand why these lines of inquiry were important and he said, “You need to focus on hot topics like I do.”

It was interesting, because if I continued on that path, he was trying to let me know what the negative consequences could be. There were some colleagues of mine who identified as people of color and wanted to talk about race, but chose not to because they were terrified of not earning tenure. But, I proceeded to research what I am most passionate about and it really didn’t matter to me what marginalized groups people identified with, their stories were important to my research.

Being gay impacts my publications. I’ve focused on marginalized populations since I was very young. I didn’t know the words social justice and equity and I didn’t know what gay meant, but I knew something was wrong in our society at a very young age. Being a member of the dominant cultural group in regard to race, the issue of race came to the forefront first. And then gender. And then class. And then sexual orientation. So, I think that learning about different groups as well as my experience in watching how people were treated accordingly has definitely impacted my work. And my work impacts my publication.

**Motherhood**

At least in my department, parents of school-aged children are a marginalized group. There aren’t a lot of us. So, because there aren’t a lot of us, it impacts what we do and why we do it. I have been asked to take on more and more leadership roles. I’m already a program coordinator. I’ve been asked, “Would you consider being a dean?” People from other parts of the country have asked me, “Would you come here and be a department chair, a dean, or . . .” I
can’t do that. Being a faculty member impacts me taking on certain responsibilities and the decisions I make in regard to my priorities. My choices need to align with my values.

I want to make sure my daughter critically thinks about the world and challenges everything. And, of course, when you have a child who challenges everything, you have to realize that they’re going to challenge everything that you do too. My daughter is not only adopted, but she is adopted from another country and she has attended schools where she may be one of the only students of color in a school. Trying to negotiate that and having two moms, has impacted how I see the world. Being a mother influences me as a faculty member because as she continues to develop, the concerns she has change, and then our conversations change. Right now, we are talking about microagressions and macroagressions.

As a faculty member, I have access to literature that I think other moms who identify as gay may not have access to. There is privilege associated with the fact that I work with people who are going to be working with children. I utilize that privilege to try to make an impact on the way in which school leaders will serve specific populations.

When I go into my daughter’s school, people who don’t want to talk with me about any of this get really upset. They’re like, “Oh god, here she comes with all this culturally responsive crap” or “Oh, she’s going to tell us what a rubric is.” So, people notice that they can’t snowball me. For people who are insecure or who don’t know what they’re talking about, they get really nervous. I just don’t want people pushing my daughter around or telling her things that aren’t legit and causing more damage than good. Good intentions are good, but they’re not good enough. They don’t always know that I am a faculty member; sometimes I try not to say anything. But, my daughter loves the fact that I’m a professor, so she makes it very well known.
And I think sometimes, she doesn’t understand why some of the people who work with her may not be so happy about that.

**Identities in Academia**

I probably have 250 photographs in my office. My daughter is plastered everywhere. And I have my wedding picture on my front door. So, wall-to-wall, I create a space that makes me smile. Those photos and memories make me happy. When people walk in, they know what matters to me. I don’t hide any of that.

I think that, in the context in which I serve the university, being a mom is different from being a father. The men who are fathers travel to different countries, they go to conferences, they stay late at work because they have someone at home. I don’t know of any men who I work with who are dads and identify as gay, I only know dads who identify as heterosexual and they depend on their wives to take care of their children. So, they go off and they do what they want to do. It is really interesting. I see women for whom it is very different, whether they’re gay or straight. They’re like, “No, I’m a mom and this is my responsibility.” It is fascinating to see that. Even if it is two women who are faculty members. It isn’t like one takes on a different role than the other. So, whatever is decided upon in Western society of what it means to be a mother, it is definitely engrained in the people that I work with and in me and how I’ve understood what it means to be a mom.

It is really interesting to watch people in my department who identify as empty-nesters, or who have never had children, or who have never worked in schools. They really don’t get it; they don’t understand. And the expectation, sometimes, that they have for their colleagues is as though they forget that we have, as a mom or father or guardian, the responsibility of taking care of someone else. And that that has to come first. There’s a lot of pressure, of course, to publish.
And you have to be at this meeting and do this. You have to try to negotiate that and you still have to come out on top.

My service is aligned with my teaching and my teaching is aligned with my research. It makes sense and I think it is more authentic. I do it with my intention in mind. Everything has a purpose. I don’t really care about whether or not the university thinks it is important. It is important because it involves children. So, I do it anyway. But I do it only after I’ve met whatever the minimum requirements are at the university. I meet the requirements and then, above that, I do what I want. That way they can’t get upset with me because I do more.

I realize the power and privilege that I have because I am a faculty member and I try to utilize that in a way to make sure that people who have been deemed invisible are visible and people who have been silenced are not silenced. I do that in my publication. Especially since I attained tenure, I try to use my privilege in a way that is meaningful.

So, being gay, I feel this pressure to represent all people who are gay. Because, if I goof up, “Oh, wellll, you know she’s one of those.” So, I’ve always tried to go beyond whatever the expectations are. I’ve had high expectations for myself and being a mom just adds another layer to that because my daughter comes first. So, if people don’t understand that, sometimes it is difficult to help them realize that if my daughter is sick, I have to work from home. Or, if I have to pick her up from school, I can’t have a meeting at 4 o’clock. If she needs help or wants me to go on a field trip, that comes first to me. Sometimes, my colleagues who either aren’t parents or don’t have someone to take care of in their life – there is just this disconnect. They just don’t get it. It is really hard to help them understand that it isn’t like I am taking off on vacation. I’m taking care of my loved ones. That is the priority with me.
When I’m working with students, whether they have parents or partners or children to take care of – whatever it is, I always tell them that family comes first. So, being a mom impacts me in that way. I have to set my priorities. I love my job, but I love my daughter more.

There is a group of women at the university who are just so dysfunctional. They’re kind of like “mean girls” – they’re all White women who don’t have children. They have so many – isms included in that group. I just stay away from it. One of my colleagues said, “Elizabeth, only come to campus if you have to. That’s it. It’s a hostile environment. Only come when you have to, otherwise, be in a place where you feel safe and you can do your important work, whether at schools, community organizations, your home. But don’t come here. There’s no rule that says when you have to be here. You come when you need to.” So, I have taken that advice seriously and have adjusted my life accordingly.

In addition to the negative experiences I already mentioned (with my mentor and a former student and the derogatory terms about people who are gay), I think I am treated differently at the university than people who aren’t LGBTQ because literally nine out of ten things that we do as a program are questioned. I have to go through a lot of steps to get things done, whereas other people don’t. I know that as I have challenged things and questioned things along the way, I have gotten a lot of push-back. And it all started when they found out I was gay. So, I feel as though it is related. It is harassment at a very interesting level. I have felt no support from the administration. They couldn’t have cared less.

**Tenure and Promotion**

When my life was threatened and the director and program coordinator made the comment that they did, I did not fight it, because I was afraid. Right when I turned in my tenure and promotion file, the director and program coordinator tried to play around with me again and
have me do something that was considered illegal and unethical. I knew my file was already in, so I knew that they couldn't really do too much to me. My external review letters were already in and I knew they were very positive. So, I stood up for myself and I was told that they were going to ship me to teach in China and Turkey if I didn't do what they told me. And I said, “Yeah, you can't do that, I am a single mom and you are not going to do that to me. My daughter comes first. You're not going to ship me to another country because you want to have me engage in something that's illegal and unethical and because I won't do it - now you're threatening me.”

So, I knew it was risky and I knew somehow and in some slight way it could have impacted my tenure, but I knew once it was in, that that was just my anxiety talking, and I just stood up for myself and went to the dean and shared what was going on and even though he said he is a hands-off dean and wouldn't deal with it, the next day, they didn't apologize, but they had to take care of the situation the way it should have been taken care of. I got my tenure and I’m sure that didn’t make them very happy.

Benefits and Family-Friendly Policies

I adopted my daughter before I was working in universities, so I didn’t use any of the family related policies with regard to her adoption. However, when my former partner needed better insurance and wanted to go back to school, I paid for the domestic partnership insurance. Now that it is legal for my wife and I to be married, she automatically has access if she wants to take courses at my university.

Messages

There have been people who have been extremely cruel and hostile. I don’t want anything to do with them. I stay away from people like that at my current university. I only
associate with them if it is in a meeting. Otherwise, I stay as far away from them as I can. I don’t need that negativity in my life.

I think one of the reasons my partner was attracted to me is because of my passion and that I live my work. I walk my talk and I would go to the n’th degree for my daughter and the people I serve. So, I think she is very proud of me and supports me in every way possible to engage in this work authentically. She goes to all the workshops we offer, she goes to events with me. She reads my writing. She is very supportive.

**Support**

I am supported by my friends and colleagues. I have a handful of colleagues at my current university that I trust. I have colleagues outside the university that I trust. My wife. My parents don’t really know what I do, but if I needed to express frustration, I’m sure they would listen to me. But, I’m the first person in my family to go to college, so all of the language is difficult for my parents to contextualize. My wife, my friends, my colleagues – that is my support system.

They let me say what I need to say. I can vent. I can cry. I can problem solve. I can share ideas. There is a lot of power behind publishing, so when people think they’re just going to continue being the way they are, I think they forget that we have the power to write about it and then it will be in writing forever. So, I find peace in being able to reflect and utilize my experiences to improve my teaching and to improve the work that I do and how I do it.

**Josie: Grappling with the Department’s Unspoken Rule**

When I came to my university, I had queer in the title of my dissertation and my work was about LGBTQ+ youth, so I was pretty out there on the market. I’m not somebody you would necessarily read as queer, so I was out in those other ways. But, I felt like they knew they
were hiring someone who was queer. My scholarship is all about queer issues. People have been pretty accepting; it hasn’t really felt like a huge deal that I am queer. There are some people who are less comfortable about it than others, without a doubt, but it is such a big place that you can kind of avoid the people who want to avoid you anyway. It isn’t like you’re forced to work closely.

Of course, I wasn’t a parent then. Now, in terms of being a queer parent, the parenting was definitely a huge shift in terms of my work life. But the interpersonal dynamics don’t feel that different to me. People who judged me as a queer person judge me as a queer parent, and I basically don’t spend that much time with them. So, the pragmatic stuff like getting benefits was more troubling than the interpersonal stuff. I’m sure there were some people who didn’t talk to me about becoming a parent because they didn’t approve of it. Those were usually people I don’t talk to anyway. So, I’ve gotten kind of used to it and braced myself for certain things. It certainly says something about them, and I’m not trying to minimize that. But, it also doesn’t feel like it is that big of a deal. I have pictures of my kids and my partner in my office.

Being queer has supported my faculty role in that I'm doing scholarship that needs to be done, where there are gaps in the literature. In the university, I am valued for being on committees to offer different perspectives. There are some double-edged swords there. Being any kind of minority in a place that values diversity, you get pulled onto a lot of committees and you end up advising a lot of students who share the same marginalized identity markers as you. Those things are a real privilege in many, many ways, but they are also a time-suck. I don’t know if it is a positive. If so, it is a positive and a negative.

Similarly, being a queer parent, I’ve been the guest speaker in early elementary classes to speak on how to support the kids of queer parents in their classrooms or I get pulled onto queer
parenting panels (where essentially, people who want to be queer parents come and listen to you talk about your experiences). So there are opportunities to share my experiences, which is great. But it can also be tokenizing and time-consuming. So, it is positive and negative.

I think I was a lot more nervous before having kids and getting full—I’ve become decreasingly nervous. Part of that is having kids and that you have to be pretty comfortable as a queer parent in the world when you have kids. You never get to hide your identity. So, I think I feel braver. Or more confident. Or less anxious about those identities. It is hard to separate what is about rank and what is about parenting because those things happened simultaneously for me. My guess is that it is about both.

Teaching

The students that I work with are either already teaching or are pre-service teachers. I understand the significance of working with pre-service teachers better now that I have kids who are in schools. In my classes, being a queer parent almost always comes up in conversation. The content of what I teach includes more queer topics and I teach it more passionately or intently because of my identity as a queer parent. I am more likely to talk about my experiences in schools as a queer parent. I have stories that I share about things to do and things not to do in working with students who have same-sex parents.

Working with pre-service teachers, I am more likely to include topics pertinent to LGBT people more often and with more fervency that I did before I had kids. I do more to challenge pre-service teachers’ homophobia or transphobia because I imagine them working with my kids. I’m more hard-core in that I don’t let homophobic or transphobic comments slide in the way I might have before. I think if I don’t take care of this, my kid is going to have to take care of this—and that is messed up.
Research

My scholarship is influenced by my identity as a queer parent. All the stuff I write about is queer stuff. I can think of one exception: a little project that I worked on that was more about sex education than queer topics in particular. But even in writing that, I paid attention to queer audiences to make sure they would see themselves in the writing. So all of my work is LGBT themed. Also, I’m a qualitative ethnographic researcher, so I believe that researcher positionality needs to be articulated clearly in writing, so that people know how to interpret my work. So, I’m out in all of my writing.

I remember the first article I got published out of my dissertation. The editor of the journal had invited me to submit an article based on a talk I gave at a conference, so I was really excited about it, everything was good. But then the editor changed, and the first editor had accepted the article but the editor who came in after didn’t like the language in the piece. In a student’s poem that was meant to be published in the article, I think there were the words fisting and cunt. And the second editor wanted me to get rid of both of them, and I did. I wouldn’t do that now, but I did it then, because I felt terrified that I would never get anything published. I think that if it had been fucking instead of fisting, I’m not sure he would have said anything. So, I think there are ways, like that, where people have different cringe-points around queer scholarship.

I think that has impacted some of my publication. I also think there are some people who publish stuff just because they felt like we needed work on LGBTQ+ stuff and that maybe there weren’t any people writing on that stuff, and so maybe they were more generous in their reads of my work. So, I think it works both ways on my publishing being influenced by my queerness.
When I did my dissertation work, I was a queer researcher among queer participants. When I came to this job (this is the only academic job that I’ve had), it was the first time that I was a queer person among a lot of allies. And that has continued to be the case in many ways. Learning to be a queer person with queer people is really different than learning to be a queer person among allies. It is difficult to figure out when to push people and when not to push people. I know that there are times that I just push people out of the work because I am so passionate about it. And I know some people who want to be involved in this work for exactly that reason, so it is really a challenge.

I am part of a group with colleagues that started 11 years ago, within a week of my first child’s birth. And sometimes it is hard to feel like I am one of the few queer people in the group. I feel like I don’t want to be speaking for all queer people. But, learning to work across differences is something I really value and I think it is really important, so I’m invested in that work. The most recent project we’ve been working on in the past couple of years has been about making regional schools more LGBT-friendly. Because I am a parent of school-aged kids, my colleague and I chose to focus on families, so we interviewed same-sex parents, and parents of gender-creative kids. My research questions all come from these topics; so I am really focused on the family piece.

During my pre-tenure years, I was publishing a lot. I had about two or three publications a year before I got tenure. That was also before I had kids. So, after having my first kid, while I was tenured, it took the pressure off. I think it is really common, actually; I haven’t read anything about this, but just anecdotally speaking, I think it is really common that after people go up for tenure they often have a plummet. They work on other things. I definitely did that. Right after I got tenure, there was a time when I didn’t publish. I had little tiny pieces: I’d gotten an
award and needed to write a response to it, I was asked to write part of an editorial piece. But what I was writing was not the hard stuff. After the shock of the first kid, I think things became more balanced again and I started publishing again.

My second kid was born during my sabbatical. I don’t think she threw me for quite the loop my younger one threw me for. So, I’ve published more steadily since then. My sabbatical goal was to write a book, and I did write a book. But, I think it would have been a really different book if I weren’t doing the baby thing at the time. I think it would have been better. In my experience, and I don’t want to generalize to everybody, but when I was pregnant, I had a lot of trouble focusing on anything other than my kid. And then in the newborn phases, I also had a lot of trouble focusing on anything except my kid. Nothing felt as important as my kid during those times.

I think everything suffered as a result of that, because you can’t do everything all the time. So, I felt like I made a choice to prioritize being a mother, and it came as a sacrifice to my scholarship. I’m peaceful with that decision, but I think it is true. I was definitely much more productive before I had kids. Of course, I was also pre-tenured so I was under a certain amount of stress, which encouraged that productivity.

But, I don’t know that I have ever been as productive as I was before I had kids. Maybe once they’re grown that will feel different, but it doesn’t feel different now. It is different: it’s better. I don’t think it’s ever been as bad as it was during the pregnancy and first three months of parenting and then certainly again with my second child. So, it has gotten better, but it hasn’t gotten kicked back to where it was before I had kids. Now, my publication is less defined by parenting and more defined by projects. Now I publish more steadily, but still not as ferociously as I did before I had kids, which was also before I had tenure.
**Motherhood**

My kids went to a preschool affiliated with my university. It is located in a high-need community, so half of the spots are reserved for the community. I’ve had very good experiences with the teachers there. I go in to the room and see books that reference same-sex families. For example, I’ll go in and they’ll be reading *And Tango Makes Three*. Or I’ll go in and there is a chart on the wall where the kids are supposed to list how many brothers they have, how many sisters they have, how many moms they have, how many dads they have. So, my kids are invited but not obligated to represent their families. They have things like that that I think I have really appreciated. My partner and I have always been treated as equal parents and been invited to the parent-teacher conferences. All that feels good. Now, within the community, there were clearly some parents of other children there who did not value same-sex parents. So, that was another thing to think about. I don’t think my kids noticed, or if they did, they didn’t tell me. Although, I always asked for my kids to be in rooms with other kids with same-sex parents, which happened for my older kid but only happened in the very end for my younger kid. Frankly, I was less anxious about it for my younger kid, so I probably didn’t push as hard.

Once it was time to start K-12 school, my older kid went to the neighborhood school, which is a school people love in the area. It is a great school; people love it. We were pretty strategic about starting there, because we couldn’t undo anything. In my relationship, I am the more feminine one and my partner is more androgynous, so I walked our kid to school on the first day. I met the teacher. My older kid was in a hyper feminine phase at that point. Like, drag queen feminine: pink, fluffy everything. And I remember walking up and seeing another pink-fluffy kid with a woman with short hair who was wearing a tie who I interpreted as lesbian (I don’t know if I was right or not) and I was so relieved, like “Oh, good. This will be good.” And
then at the end of the day, I walked in to school to pick up my kid from the first day of kindergarten, and the teacher was excusing my kid to the woman in the tie. So, we got generalized as the lesbian moms. And I thought, “Oh noooo!”

And then they had these star of the week projects, where the kids kind of introduce themselves. And our daughter, when she wrote about our family, talked about her cats, but not her parents. So, I was starting to see this game that she was having to play, which was really sad for me. And then, when we had parent-teacher conferences, the teacher wouldn’t make eye-contact or engage with my partner. Now, in fairness, it could be because I had been the contact up until that point, but it also felt a little homophobic. It didn’t feel right or good. It felt like my partner was being dismissed and I didn’t like that.

And, I had pretty much kept my academic identity under wraps. I was pretty nervous about making teachers feel on-guard, that they would think I’d come in and act like I was the professional educator and that they weren’t. So, I didn’t like talking about what I did. It just felt like this weird place.

So, the next year, we sent her to a different school. It was a lottery school where a ton of queer family send their kids; it is kind of known for that. And we went in on the first day, and my daughter’s teacher was there with her partner and they were putting the bulletin board up. It was just an entirely different experience. I felt no anxiety around that at all, and the teacher already knew I was an academic, so I didn’t have to hide that either. It just felt a lot easier.

My younger kid has only gone to that school. She hasn’t had the same teachers, but it has felt similar. My younger kid didn’t go through the pink-fluffy phase; she’s just a tough-kid. I don’t know how her gender identity will play out, we’ll just see. During our first parent-teacher conference, her teacher said to me, “So, I don’t know if you know, but your daughter is going by
a different name.” And I had no idea; I thought “Oh my gosh, this is my work and I am totally out of the loop.” So I said, “Oh, well, tell me how you handle that.” And she said, “Well, when she writes her name on the paper, I call her that. And when she writes the other name on her paper, I just call her that.” So, it’s not really like a gender identity thing, but I think she was using it as a general rule of thumb, which is what I would tell teachers to do. She was doing that, so I felt like that was good. Whatever happens, this will be ok.

But, my older kid had another teacher at the same school who wasn’t easy for me from the get-go. She was really rigid and seemed insecure, so I felt uncomfortable giving her feedback because I was afraid it might intimidate her. This was an Olympic year and she linked the lessons to Greek gods and goddesses. They turned the lessons into books and we were supposed to pay $25 for one of these books. I wasn’t going to be the one whose kid came home without the book, so I bought one. When the book came home, there was a dedication page at the front, and she had printed in each book, “To mom and dad, the true goddess and god in my world” or something like that. I was furious. I was so mad. And there were at least 4 other kids in that class with same-sex parents who I knew of, not to mention that there may have been some I didn’t know of or the kids who weren’t raised by a mom and a dad. So I was really mad.

I talked to the other same-sex parents I knew and did a reality check, like “How are you feeling, am I overreacting?” Other people seemed frustrated too. So, I was going to talk to her at our parent-teacher conference. She was very proud of this book and had them on display at the conferences. She was a wreck, you could tell she was a nervous wreck during the conference. So, I never said anything, because I felt like I was going to put her over the edge. Someone else eventually talked to her. So, it all kind of just depends on the teacher and the school.
When I later said I was going to switch schools, the principal called me. She had never wanted to talk to me before, but she called me to ask why we were switching schools. And I said, “Frankly, I don’t feel like this has been very welcoming to my family, so we are going to a school that is.” And she said, “We have plenty of lesbian and gay families.” And I said, “I’m not saying you don’t have them, I’m just saying I don’t feel welcome.” So, it really depends on the school and the leadership. It also depends on the teacher. It never doesn’t come up. In my experience, it always comes up. My academic experience is really all tied up in this, because I might feel more comfortable making demands if I wasn’t afraid of them being afraid of me.

There is a flexibility in being an academic. My kids can come to campus with me when they need to. They can come to conferences with me when they need to. They’ve traveled some places just because I had conferences there. But, then there are times when I can’t prioritize my family the way I wish I would because my work means a lot to me. I love my work. I think it matters in the world. I don’t always want to give it up. Most of the things are positive, but this is probably negative in that there are times when I prioritize work above family because the work demands it, but also because even if I think rationally and clearly about it, both of these things are important.

Whereas, I think someone who might not do work that is tied up in their identity in ways that you’re trying to reach out to a whole bunch of people might feel like, “I’m not going in to work today, so I’m just not. I’m staying home. My kid is the more important thing.” So, maybe there is a negative side where my kids don’t get as undivided or equivocal attention. I’m sure I’d be a different kind of parent if I did a job that wasn’t so demanding of my time and energy, or one that I didn’t like as much.
I like my job. Figuring out the priorities is hard when you love your work and you love your family and you want to do it all, all of the time. I can’t go to things when the kids are sick. Also, during the summer you’re supposed to be off duty, so you don’t get paid. But everybody knows that the summer is when you’re supposed to be writing as much as you can. The first summer we didn’t have day care; I didn’t realize you were supposed to start planning for camps as early as January. So, I was knocked on my butt there: no childcare. That kind of kicked my ass. And then the next summer I planned to do all of the camps, and then I ended up being really resentful that I was paying to be away from my kids to do work that I wasn’t getting paid for.

Ever since then, I’ve been trying to find a balance of giving them enough to do so that they are happy and entertained and also consider my budget and how much I’m willing to give before I feel trapped and resentful. I’m trying to work out what time I can spend with them and what time I can spend with work. I haven’t gotten that down yet. Every summer I try something a little bit different; I’m always tweaking it. Really, it is the same balance issue all year long, it is just amplified in the summer.

As a queer academic, I think it is important to me that I connect my kids to other queer academics. And that is really doable here. It is a big enough place where those of us who are queer and have kids connect. I guess not all of us, but my kids would never say they don’t know any queer academic families. I want them to see and be friends with a whole range of people, but I also don’t want them to feel like they’re the only ones of anything. So, I’m able to do that. That’s a family decision I make because of being a queer academic. I also think that having a network of academics with families with same-sex parents gives my children other people to talk to and vent with.
Because my work is focused on LGBTQ+ people, I make sure that my kids are paying attention and are being kind to people who are perceived as and punished because of being perceived as LGBTQ+. I make sure that my kids are being allies in the world. I also make sure they learn how to defend themselves. For example, one of the first camps that I sent my older kid to, she said something about her moms and a boy said something like “Ewww, gross!” and he wouldn’t sit next to her on the swing set after that. So, I coach them through handling situations like that. I don’t say, “This is the way,” but rather “How would it feel if you tried this?” Maybe, “So, how would it feel to say to that boy, ‘Why do you think that is gross?’” Maybe she doesn’t want to engage in the conversation, so then, “How would it feel to tell the camp counselor his reaction to your statement?” So, I have given them options for different ways to stand up for themselves. I have probably learned a little bit more about those things because of the work I do. I’ve heard a lot of different stories of the ways that people choose to do those things: to be allies, to stand up for themselves.

**Identities in Academia**

Being a mother and a queer faculty member, you have to switch priorities. Certainly I have less time. The amount of time I spend with and on my kids diminishes the amount of time I spend as an academic. This is probably true for any mother who is a faculty member. Pre-kids, I could have spent all day, every day working. I was not a life-balance person pre-kids. So, that has changed for sure.

I do think that after becoming a parent something feels different, like I am less queer, like I have bought into the heteronormative. I used to be really super active in the sexuality studies program at my university. And when I go to national conferences and participate in a queer special interest group this thing happens: I need to go to bed earlier, I can’t stay out as late.
There’s definitely something different. There are some things where I’m middle-aged and boring in a way that I feel like I wouldn’t be if I were still middle-aged but not a parent. Especially that I am less edgy or less available. I think I was probably all of those things before, but now it is more pronounced and I am allowed to use it more now that I have kids. At some point it sort of feels sad.

There are definitely people who I can see that find me less interesting as a result of my being a parent. Particularly among queer-focused groups, I think you lose a lot of status as an academic when you become a parent. People can be lovely about it; people here had baby showers for me. But, people expect less of you in terms of your scholarship. You know how nuns and priests aren’t supposed to get married because your first commitment is to God – it almost feels like when you have kids, you are conveying that your first commitment is no longer to your scholarship or your work. That you’ve proven you’re not worthy or something, particularly among queer communities. Not only have you broken your vow of scholarship, but you’ve also sold out to the heteronormative. But, I love being a parent, so it is a reasonable trade-off. I’m totally at peace with the trade-off.

The way being queer impacts my experience as a faculty mom has changed over time. Part of it is just because of my situation, because my partner started working here about six years ago. Since we are both in this space and have parenting responsibilities, we have had to tag-team on a lot. For example, we can’t both go to the department event on a Friday night. I’m not going to get a sitter for that. So, because she is pre-tenure, now I do more of the parenting stuff and she does more of the faculty stuff. In some ways, I feel like over time my role has been diminished as a result of being a queer parent, but it is more the choice that my partner and I are making to
balance things together. Otherwise, there is probably some element of people getting used to us, but not perceptively so.

There are times that being queer works to your benefit and sometimes it works as a detriment. It goes both ways, and sometimes it just depends on whom you’re working with and what their take is on you. I think what is different is that if I weren’t queer; people wouldn’t have a take on me. It wouldn’t be as up for grabs. There is a guy I work with who is a Focus on the Family guy. So, I assume he believes that being in same-sex relationships is sinful. I just work really hard to be my nicest, smartest self around him so that it challenges his assumptions. As a coping strategy, I try to be the person I can be proud of; I can be kind and thoughtful and carry my weight. Then I know it is about him and not about me.

The city we live in, for this part of the country, is a really queer city. I acknowledge that it isn’t like that everywhere. I acknowledge the privilege of being able to make that claim. But, to me, in this context, being a mother is more penalized; being a parent is more penalized. I think being a parent with a stay-at-home partner would be more valued. In non-queer contexts, it seems to me that the parents who have value are straight men who have wives who stay home. It is totally acceptable for them to talk about their kids, because their kids never interrupt their work life. So, that is the exception to the rule. Among queer folks who don’t seem to value my motherhood, I do the same thing as I do with colleagues. I just try to be the person I can be proud of. And then, it’s like, “If this isn’t queer enough for you, then I’m not queer enough for you and that is ok. I don’t need to make everyone happy.” So, it is key for me to act in ways that I can separate their judgment from my character.
In some ways, I have been treated differently than my peers who aren’t queer, but it isn’t always bad. Sometimes it involves being invited to bring experience and expertise to the table. Sometimes it is ugly, mostly it isn’t.

**Tenure and Promotion**

I was nine months pregnant, huge pregnant, when I turned in my materials for my fourth-year review. I can remember pushing that box down the hall and my belly was just so big. That went well. I knew my publication productivity would plummet after having kids, so I decided to go up for tenure a year early so that the plummet wouldn’t be evident on my CV. That was absolutely the right decision. I needed to feel less pressure, as a parent.

I could have used the tenure-clock stop policy. During the same year we got parental leave on campus, people started being allowed to stop the clock for a baby. But I had a strong fourth year review and was recommended to go up early from what they told me.

Seven years later, when I was asked to go up for full, I said “I’ll do it, but I’m not working my butt off to do it.” There are some committees that only full professors can sit on, and they needed more people because so many full professors had retired. So, the stakes were low. I thought, “promote me or not.” It wasn’t like I was going to lose my job, and my ego didn’t feel as vulnerable as it had before I got tenure. Because a lot of the things related to work, not my scholarship, but a lot of things just felt less important after I had kids, because my kids feel so much more important. But, it also felt like politically the right moment. I had a chair who supported me. I felt like circumstances weren’t going to get any better. So, while I hadn’t published as much as I had imagined I would have by the time I would go up for full, I thought “It’s fine. I will try it.”
I am definitely learning how to be a more balanced person, and my family is teaching me how to do that. I’ve gotten better at it – I’m not good at it, but I’ve gotten better at it over time. Some of it is practice, like allowing myself to not do something that I would usually say yes to. But I also think that some of it is getting more secure on the job. I definitely felt more job security after getting tenure, but I feel a lot more comfortable taking risks, whether they are on behalf of my family or anything else, after becoming full, even more so than I anticipated. It is not really about job security, it is about having the confidence of knowing the institution, knowing the limits, knowing the dynamics. I don’t feel like it is going to be that big of a deal if I don’t go to the opening event every year, because people know me – they know I’m carrying my weight. They know I do my job. I think it changes over the years in that way, as people come to know who I am and what I’m likely to contribute.

That is because of the length of time and because I became full. It is all tied together. It is certainly due to the length of time that I have been at my university, because there is really only a day (although it feels like a year) between when you’re associate and when you’re full. It felt much more different than I expected it to. And perhaps it was because I felt the sudden responsibility for owning my knowledge. I couldn’t be a full professor and say, “Well, I don’t know how we do this here.” It is my job to think back on my experiences here and think of how things have been in the past, what worked well, what worked poorly, and how we might move forward. If I’m not going to do it, who is going to?

Full people were retiring around me left and right, so it felt like we were losing the people with the experience and we have to become the people with the experience. I think of people who have been here longer who have not become full who I think feel less confident in their work here. Maybe it is because of that lack of confidence that they haven’t become full; I
don’t know what is causal. I just know that I can think of folks who are probably permanent
associates, who, if I have a different idea than theirs moving forward on something, I feel more
confident in naming that now than I did before. That is kind of messed up; I’m not saying it is
right. I’m just saying it is definitely a change that has confluence.

Benefits and Family-Friendly Policies

When you work for my university, you have to get your medical services through the
university hospital in order to be fully covered. So, when my older kid was born, there were a lot
of people who came in for that birth, like gay nurses who wanted to be part of the experience or
something. I think that in some ways I was a spectacle because it hadn’t happened that much
before. But it is real subtle. So, I don’t know if that’s good or bad. I just noticed it and thought,
“Oh, ok, that’s why this is happening. Alright, cool” and just moved on. So, there are
experiences like that, that aren’t huge life-changing events by any means but are just different as
the result of being a queer faculty parent.

The year I became pregnant with my first kid was the first year my university had
maternity leave. So, that made it seem more possible. I used the maternity leave. It was
supposed to be six weeks paid leave and then up to six weeks unpaid leave. When my second
kid was born, I was on sabbatical, so I didn’t use the leave policy then. But, my first kid was
born in early September. So, that was the beginning of the semester. I wasn’t really on leave,
they just didn’t have me teach that semester. I still worked the whole time, but I didn’t teach so I
had more flexibility. And I think they kind of thought of it as my six weeks stretched across the
semester. I came to work all the time, I just strapped her on and came to work. The idea that I
could have had a sub teach my class for six weeks and then I’d have had to finish the semester
would have been worse. The advantage would have been that I would have been totally off for
those six weeks, as opposed to strapping her on and bringing her to dissertation defenses or whatever. But, I think the ignoring of the technicalities of the leave policy was a gift. The person who made that decision was making every effort to be generous.

With my second kid, I had a lot of trouble conceiving and I went through about two and a half years of fertility treatment. I had good benefits, so I could do that. And I had a flexible schedule, so I could get to the doctor as soon as I ovulated. The flexibility I had as a faculty member mattered in that. But after having her, I think all of it mattered a little less to me. Because I had tenure, I just felt like it didn’t matter so much. But, if we hadn’t had infertility benefits, we wouldn’t have been able to have our second kid.

My partner works for the same university now, so the need for same-sex partner benefits changed at that point. She doesn’t need to be on my benefits now. But before she worked here, we did need that. At one point we couldn’t get them and then they started having domestic partnership benefits and we could. They’re not like marriage benefits in that you get taxed for the extra money that it costs. So, they consider the amount of money that it costs to cover your partner to be part of your pay; therefore it is taxed which is different than someone who is married. Now, we could get married and we wouldn’t have that tax. But, we aren’t married. And now that she isn’t on my benefits, if we did get married, it would not be for the purpose of getting benefits. Being a queer parent also affects us in the workplace in terms of which kid goes on whose insurance, but it isn’t so much the interpersonal stuff.

Messages

I think the people who aren’t my friends in the department mostly ignore my parenting and being queer. The people who are my friends embrace both. But, I do feel as though there is an unspoken rule that we aren’t supposed to talk about those. Talking about parenting suggests
that we aren’t really fully committed to our jobs. And we aren’t supposed to talk about queerness, because it’s private – not that I believe that. I don’t believe either of those things. But, I think there is an implicit message that unless you are friends with somebody you don’t really talk about those things.

I might be complicit in that, not because I believe those things, but because I’ve been well-trained in them. I don’t want my dean to ever hear me talk about balancing my home and work life, because I don’t want her to think it is an issue for me. I don’t talk about my relationship with her either, mostly because we don’t have those kinds of conversations. But I wouldn’t want to. It isn’t that I don’t want her to know that I’m queer. I don’t think that is an issue. But, I don’t want her to think about the domestic part of me. I want her to only think about the professional part of me. So, in the context of my work, I’m perfectly happy to talk about it. Except she won’t buy it because it doesn’t get the grants. I hear these messages coming down and I believe they’re wrong, but I can’t say I don’t play by them. It’s kind of messed up.

From students, I’ve gotten different messages. It is mostly fine, but a few things have happened. I had a queer student who was way hyper-focused on me. She said inappropriate things, and I don’t think she would have done that had I been a straight teacher. But, I’ve also had a student who responded to a book we read for class by saying that “Well, it isn’t because the main character is with a woman that she shouldn’t be in a relationship. She shouldn’t have been having any relationship because she is a parent. She shouldn’t have a romantic life, because she has a parental life.” It was so weird. I hadn’t braced myself for that at all. I expect homophobia, but I hadn’t expected homophobia disguised as prudishness. I had another student who seemed to be following me around and complaining about anything gay. It really stood out and it stood out to my colleagues too. She would just show up at my office and annoy me. It
seemed to me like she was working through her stuff, maybe internalized homophobia. And then I’ve certainly commonly had students who say, “It’s not because I’m homophobic, but . . .” and then they’ll say something homophobic.

From my partner, we have a contest in jest. I came out with her. She is the only woman I’ve ever dated. So, I always assume that she is more queer than I am, because she has been out longer than I have been by at least 10 years. But, I’ve learned because of my scholarly work that there is a lot of queer stuff she doesn’t know, like historical stuff, or particular leaders, or when things happened – fact kind of stuff. So there is that joke between us: Who is the real queer? Who is the professional queer? Who is the personal queer?

I started my tenure-track position before she even considered going into a Ph.D. program, so we have to be very careful around academics. Things that are new and exciting for her are not new and exciting to me in that world anymore. I’m a rigid person. I like to get on a schedule and follow it and when it breaks I tweak it. And she is much more loose about all that. So, I have to be careful not to impose my way of doing the tenure-track on her, because it won’t work for her. So, we have to be really careful with each other about that.

With the parenting, she is always willing to step up in a way that is hard for me. It is hard for me to when I have a meeting that I have to go to and she comes in and says, “Well, I’m going to have to cancel that meeting.” So, there are ways that she can step up and parent really amazingly and lets me be the slacker parent. But then there are other things she knows I need. For example, one time one of our kids fell off the swing set at school and we were both actually in the same meeting. I was running the meeting, so you would think she would go, but I needed to go and make sure she was ok. Part of that was that I couldn’t remember what paperwork we would need or not need. I couldn’t remember the rules and it was like my brain stopped when I
found out she got hurt. And I knew I would be able to navigate the hospital, as in I would be allowed to do everything and I don’t necessarily know that she would. We have some paperwork, but I don’t know what she keeps with her or doesn’t. And that all just feels tricky to me.

So, I guess we vary on the messages we give each other as parents, depending on the situation and the legal confines. I think we would be more likely to get married (which we aren’t likely to do), if we knew what it meant in terms of how it would impact our parenting. If I knew she could be the one to take the kids to the ER and everything would be fine, I would probably push the marriage issue. But, just for tax benefits, I am not likely to push for it. So, the messages feel related to who is more of a parent and who we are in relationship to each other in those categories.

My kids probably don’t understand everything about me as a faculty parent. I think they just think I work, and they probably think everybody has a faculty parent. In terms of being queer, they have navigated that a lot. If I go to a soccer game and then maybe I can’t go to the next one and my partner does, our kid is automatically out as the kid of same-sex parents in a way that she wasn’t previously because now there are two women at the field. Also because my partner is read as queer and I’m not. Most people who see me at a soccer game would probably assume there’s a husband working somewhere, and once my partner comes, that shifts. So, the kids have navigated that a lot. My older kid has really come to believe it is part of her work as an advocate to do it. I think she is at peace with it. She knows when to protect herself and when to defend herself. I’m sure other things will come up, but she is pretty practiced at it. The younger one has done this interesting thing. The older one has a bio-dad and he had a partner at the time she was born. So bio-dad and his ex-partner were her dads for a long time. They split
up. Then bio-dad married someone else, so the older one sees herself as having two moms, two
dads, and a step-dad. Both kids have the same pair of godfathers. And my younger daughter
seems to think she has five dads and two moms, even though we’ve talked about what it all
means. I just roll with it, because I figure it is doing some kind of work for her and I don’t
necessarily understand what it is just yet.

So, I think the kids have gotten the academic thing as much as they are going to. I think
they’re working on the queer thing. They definitely know us as their caregivers and there is no
ambiguity around that. We are the caregivers of the family. They know we are their parents.

**Support**

I have a lot of colleagues with whom I’m very friendly; I feel supported by them. All of
the chairs in our department have been supportive in that at least I felt like they didn’t care
whether I was queer or not. The mothering thing is harder. My deans have mostly not cared
whether I’m queer or not; I don’t talk about the mothering thing with them. It isn’t that I feel
supported or unsupported, I think it is mostly that people don’t care so much as long as you’re
doing your work.

When I interviewed here, a doctoral student pulled me aside and said, “Ok, nobody is
going to tell you this, but I want you to know . . .” and she just mapped out the queer community
for me. That really made a big difference in where I would go. That kind of conversation is an
example of stuff we do for one another; where we pull one another aside and say something.

**Joy: “I Feel More Joyful as a Mother, so I Just Figure it out”**

I don't know how being a mother affects my experience as a *lesbian* faculty member. I
know how being a mother affects being a faculty member. Being a mother heightens my
empathy, heightens the impact of the examples I share with students. Those would still be there
without my being a mother, but that is why it is heightened.

The biggest impact of being a mother on my experience as a faculty member is the time. Before I was a mother, I definitely spent a lot more time on my work. I was definitely a much more productive researcher. I spent a lot more time on my teaching. My life revolved much more around my work. Not my whole life, but I spent a lot more time on work. When I was single, I spent the most time, and then it decreased by some when I became partnered. It decreased dramatically when I became a mother; but I still work very long hours – often around the kids’ schedules. So, I definitely feel pulled in a lot of directions now. I'm always dealing with the struggle of not wanting to be away from my kids, not wanting to miss out on things.

Campus life is part of why I am a faculty member. But I am not as involved on campus as I probably otherwise would have been if I weren’t a mother who lives an hour away. There are a lot of good things that happen on campus in the evenings, typically I would like to be a part of them, but I want to go home and be with the kids. So, that is a trade-off that I make.

I could be more productive and involved, but if I really have to choose between the two, I’d rather spend the time with my children. That is my choice, and I am happy with the choice I made to be a mother. I like to be with my kids. I don't feel any kind of pressure around that. That's just always been my persona or personality. I really value time with my family, and it really makes me sad when I'm missing out on things. And, at the same time, I do want to do well in my work. I have an obligation to be with and care about students and to do much administrative work. So, there’s the reality of what I really enjoy and I have a job that I very much care about and I want to do it well too. There are parts I wish I didn't have to do, but that's just the reality of any job, it takes time. But, I don’t feel an external pressure.

Career-wise, the next thing ahead of me is achieving full professor. I like what I'm doing.
I've been doing a lot of administrative work, and I'm looking forward to transitioning some of that to others. I would like to become a full professor, but not at the expense of my family. So, I will do it as I am able to. And I know I won't regret that decision. I don't have any other career goals at this point; I don't have a lot of time to think about career goals – it is survival of the day. It is all part of a bigger picture.

Being a mother has given me a healthier perspective. I don't stress over things the way I used to. Sometimes there are things I would have perseverated on about making a decision or something going on at work, and I'm better able to kind of compartmentalize that and see the big picture in ways that I didn't before.

**Teaching**

I think I role model better for the students now than I did before I became a mother. My students know my kids, and there are times I say “I'm not going to get your papers graded because I want to be with my family.” I am very honest with them about that. I fight it; I get up at unreasonable times and I try to do what I can. But my students definitely see me modeling a little bit more of a healthy life. They don't see the unhealthy parts; they don't see the getting up early and staying up really late - but I try to model more boundaries. I want my students to see that. Being a mother supports my role as a faculty member in that way. Being a faculty member is important for me, being with students and teaching them. It is more than teaching them about theories though, it is also about life learning.

There are ways that being a lesbian supports my faculty mother role. I definitely incorporate that into my teaching. I teach about systems of privilege and oppression, and I'm able to do so based on my own experiences. The ways I’ve experienced forms of oppression most prominently have been around trying to get full legal parental status for my partner and
some of the microaggressions that she experiences. So, I talk about it in class as examples to try
to press students to think of different heterosexual privileges or what not. I can really push a
little on that, based on my own experiences. For me, the whole way of teaching about identity is
that we have to be vulnerable about who we are. I think it's really important that I bring my full
self to the classroom, that I'm able to talk about my identity and some of my experiences as a
parent in a same-sex relationship or family. I think in terms of the awareness, the sensitivity, the
empathy, in terms of my own experience as a person who is privileged in a number of other
ways, it is important to understand difference. So, I think, for me, being a lesbian enhances
myself as a teacher and a researcher.

Another reason I talk about my identity and talk about being a mother is to be a positive
role model to my students. I've got a number of students who don't identify as heterosexual and
it's really important for me that they see that they can have a partner and kids if that's what they
want. I've had students comment on that. So, I talk about having a partner and kids so those
students will see there's possibility and they see that it's not something that needs to be hidden.
For me, being a faculty member is all about the students and the kinds of relationships that I
have. So, I like them to see my life as it is. I think there is a real benefit for them to know my
kids and my partner. That my partner comes to the opening picnics and closing picnics - there
she is. I just think that's really important for students to see, for students of all sexual
orientations. That is just good learning – “here we are!” It is important to me.

There are also ways that being a parent translates into the classroom. And because I teach
folks who are going to be working with college students, I really want them to get it. I want our
students to have the kind of understanding that I wish so many of the grown-ups that my kids are
encountering had. When they have students with same-sex parents coming to their colleges and
universities, and there will be more of them as years go on, I want these professionals, my students, to be the ones who know how to welcome that family. So, I think it heightens the imperative for me in terms of the way I teach. It is helpful that I am able to really provide real-life examples. And also, there's the empathy and connection piece. Although I'm a well-educated White person who carries a lot of that privilege, and I don't ever pretend to understand the experiences of people different from me, but there's a connection there to understand a larger system of oppression. So, I make mistakes all the time and absolutely have gaps in knowledge or awareness, but I think my parenting does make me more effective in working with students.

If I weren't a mother, my career would probably look a little different. I definitely improvise more in teaching than I used to, but I still work very hard in my courses. Could I be a more perfect teacher? Absolutely! But, time is limited. I would like to relax more, watch more television, take better care of myself. I try my very best. There are definitely times when I push myself too hard being with my kids as much as I possibly can but still meeting all of the demands of being a faculty member. But I like the career I have.

Research

Being a lesbian has influenced my career and my writing. Much of my research has involved lesbians. My identity has likely sustained why I have researched this for so long. But I have been very fortunate that none of that has been challenged. My research on lesbians has been well-received, well-accepted. I've gotten recognized in different capacities for it. I have never felt as if it is marginalized work. It is what my career has been based on in a very positive way. It is funny – I know who we are is what we bring to our work, but I can't tell you a precise reason for my choosing this line of research. But, it has definitely sustained me.

Interestingly enough though, what most people don't know, is that when I first started
researching lesbian identity, I myself didn't yet identify as a lesbian, but it was probably just a
matter of months. So, I will never understand the precise origins of that, that's kind of beyond
me to understand. I didn't really even realize my sexual orientation until later in life, like around
30. And so now, much of my research has been around lesbian identity, and actually I've never
thought of it as researching myself.

Before I became a mother, I worked a lot more on the weekends. Now I get up at 5 in the
morning so I can try to work for a couple hours before the kids wake up. And I work again after
they go to bed. I sleep a lot less. My productivity has slowed down. I don't have the same need
for publishing as much. I've still been active, but it's just not as high of a priority for me
anymore. That is still hard. There are still ways that my work identity is tied to my productivity,
so it's always a struggle. It's an everyday, every hour struggle, truthfully. Every night I have to
make the decision of who am I spending time with? Am I going back to the computer? Am I
going to be with my family? On the weekends, if I have big deadlines coming up, I ask my
partner if she will take the kids and go do something for the morning so I can work. But I don't
want do that. Every day my partner will say, "do you want to work today?" And I always feel
like saying, "It's not that I want to work, it's that I need to work." It is my everyday struggle.

There are some things that I've done that have been very challenging. I co-authored a
textbook during my son's first year of life. I was not pregnant when we signed the contract, but I
knew my partner and I wanted to have a second child at some point. So my co-author and I gave
a lot of thought to whether the timing was right to write the book. That particular opportunity, I
knew I wanted to say yes to and will always be very grateful to my co-author for that
opportunity. We still laugh about it. I am glad we said yes, but I have no idea how we did it.
That was a very low sleep year. There was a period of time where my partner had to do much
more at home than I would have liked. But, I don’t regret having written the book; the opportunity was worth it. Would I do something like that again for a while? No. So, I think very carefully. It's definitely not about creating a big old vita full of publications and stuff and being recognized. I'd rather be with my kids than make all the sacrifices I need sometimes to be recognized. So that is what I do, I choose some of the things I say no to.

I have more choice of whether I'm going to be published or not, because I don't have the same worry about attaining tenure that I did pre-tenure. I have a lot more administrative work. That doesn’t go away. I can't choose whether to do it or not. It has to be done. I've got my teaching. That has to be done. But how much time every week can I spend on it? I try to do the best I can. Some weeks aren't quite as good as others, but then research and writing are the responsibilities that become a choice. Am I going to do it, am I not going to do it? I know I have to do the administration and the teaching and that's why I've said, “Ok, well, if I say yes to this, or if I write this, I don't see my family.” So, for better or worse, publishing has been the flexible responsibility. Whereas pre-tenure, and when I had one child, that's when I was much more productive. In part I had to be because I knew I had tenure in front of me. And I didn't have the other stuff. Whereas now it has changed in that the productivity has seemed optional in some ways, and I know the sacrifice of being productive. Only recently, I’ve hit a place where I feel like I'm ready to start getting engaged in research again. And I am slowly starting to, but I'll do it at my own pace because I'm able to and because I want to.

**Motherhood**

My children know I do something that's kind of important, and every once in a while I bring them to campus and they think that's neat, to see their mom doing that. What I do and know is because of who I am. That is why I research and teach what I do, and that translates into
being a parent.

As a mother to kids with same-sex parents, I think about the kinds of things I want my children to start learning at an early age. That translates from the classroom into my parenting, and I am able to parent a little bit better. What I know of larger systems of privilege and oppression from my teaching and research, I can teach on a four-year-old level in some ways. The kinds of things I teach definitely influence my parenting; the substance of what I teach and write about translates into important things to teach kids. That is a really good thing. I'm proud of who I am as a mom. Some of the knowledge I have because of what I do as a faculty member, I can start instilling in my kids at a really young age.

Also, being a mom has helped me see more the value of what I teach. I like to really talk to my 7-year-old about the things I'm teaching, translated into her language. I teach her about respecting difference, about thinking about how people are treated differently, about the importance of trying to make decisions for yourself. There are ways that I think about what I teach, systems of inequality, and I think “Yeah, it is important that I am teaching this.” So, sometimes it makes me a little bit more proud of the work I do.

My daughter has this really neat assignment where at the end of the week, she picks someone to write to and journals about her week. So, a couple of weeks ago she picked me. And the journal says, "Dear Mommy" and then she wrote about her week, and then I write back to her in the journal about my week. So, I was writing to her about what I teach and explaining it in a way she would understand. And, I described in the journal that I teach about how I want people to be treated with respect, no matter what their experiences are, to be treated with respect. And that is kind of simplistic, but I thought, “Yeah, I'm glad I do that.” And so being a mother has enhanced the meaning of the work I do.
I think the knowledge I have as a faculty member helps me be a good parent to kids of same-sex parents. So, I think that I am skilled at knowing what I want my children to be taught at a young age – not just about other people, but also about themselves, in part because of my role as a faculty member. Because I really do translate my care about different isms and teach that, on an age-appropriate level to them. I think more about heterosexism than I would if I weren’t a mom. It is like, “don’t mess with my kids!” Don’t mess with them based on their parents’ relationship. The impact is greater because the way my family is affected by heterosexism is one of the things I care most about. I care more about how my children are affected by it than how I am affected by it.

My partner is a pre-school teacher who also cares deeply about social justice. Our kids kind of get social justice on both ends. We talk about this stuff at home; we teach the same stuff. I teach it to 22 year olds and she teaches it to 3 year olds. But it's the same thing, we just use different books. And so the kids really do get it on both ends from our family. It's funny because I think a lot about how I want them to be respectful of others, but at the same time that is preparing them to respect themselves and understand differences. And I don't know that I would do that in the same way if I weren’t a faculty member. I might, because I see a lot of other people do it. But, it is definitely just such a part of my life.

I think my partner and I do a good job teaching the kids, starting to prepare them, without them knowing that. Even without us always knowing that we’re doing that. And I hope that helps them as they're eventually going to learn that they're different and they're going to experience that from other people. For the most part, they're still living in a bubble in terms of what their family looks like, and someone will burst that bubble at some point. But, I do think what I teach and what I think about all the time can really help me prepare them for when that
bubble is burst and instill a confidence in them and feel more secure in who they are. Being a faculty member helps in terms of parenting children who will eventually have that bubble burst. And woe to the person who bursts their bubble!

It also helps that as a faculty member, there are ways I can connect with other like-minded people, especially because of the area I work in. This is kind of a social class thing as well. There are a lot of like-minded people who aren't faculty members too, but specifically in regard to what I do, the kids can be exposed to other families like ours.

As the kids have gotten a little bit older and they're aware more of when I'm there and when I'm not there, I've gotten more particular about what I do and don't do. When I co-authored the book when my son was not even one, that was a time he won’t remember. I was with him a lot, but it was in much more of a frantic kind of way sometimes. Whereas it’s a different kind of relationship with them now that they are older. I'm definitely much more focused.

A benefit of being a faculty member, I do have nice flexible time, oftentimes, with the kids. Even during the school year. There are things I miss out on but there are a lot of things I don’t have to miss out on, because I can work my schedule out. And I have much more relaxed summers with them. Except I usually teach in the summer. I wish I didn’t have to, but we’re still paying for daycare, so I do. And so, again, I would love to just have more time with them. I still have a lot. That’s a positive, I guess.

The time involved in being a faculty member is a negative. My kids know I rush around. They don't know the extent of it; I try to hide as much of that as I can. And my daughter, in particular, is very in tune with people. When she jokingly tells me, “I'm more important than your work,” I will say “Of course you are, and that's why I got up early to work so that I can be with you when you wake up.” But, they see it; they know that there's still kind of a rushing
around. It's not a frantic life, by any stretch. I think actually we are a pretty simple little family, but, still, I'd like to have more time with them than I do.

And I have an hour commute to campus, so I have to figure out if there can be days I don’t have to be on campus because it if takes me that extra hour to get home, do I get home in time for piano lessons or not? I love taking them to piano lessons. So, it’s an everyday struggle. I am happy to have the flexibility that I don’t have to go to campus every day, so I try to limit it – but that is also a sacrifice too.

The kids have asked me if I could get a different job. My partner teaches at their school and they think if I were the principal (not a job for which I’m at all qualified!), we would all be in the same place all day. And in some ways that would be great. The kids are very aware that I drive far away to go to work. Their awareness has changed with their age. Maybe when they become teenagers it will become easier, maybe not, maybe it becomes harder. But, they really like to be with me right now and I hope they continue to like to be with me.

I talk about the struggles and how purposeful I am about my job choices, but all of that is overshadowed by the pure joy of being a mother. I may dream about having a job that is much more confined in hours. But, that is not my life. I like what I do. And I wouldn’t not want it this way. I feel more joyful as a mother, so I just figure it out.

**Identities in Academia**

I'm really fortunate - my family is very much a part of our program, our department, they come to the faculty socials, the opening picnics, whatnot. There they are, the students are pushing them on the swings. When I come to my job, I'm bringing me - I'm not one person at home and then this different person at work.

Being a mother comes along with that, I have these two little people. So, I’ve had to be
more careful. I've slowed down my publication. I choose more wisely. I really think hard about what I'm going to say yes to, because I know that every time I say yes to anything, it's just taking away time from my family and I think about that a lot. If I say I will review a manuscript from a journal, I know that will be a day's work and on that day nothing else in the rest of my job will go away. So, I know I will lose several hours with my family and I know often times, that could be that Saturday morning. You know, that could be when I've said to my partner, “Would you take the kids in the morning?” because I've said yes to reviewing that manuscript. Or it is one more night that I tell my partner, “You just go watch TV, I am going to be sitting at my computer.” So, I'm much more selective about what I say yes to, because I know what that means.

There are only so many things that a faculty member will have agency over. I try to schedule classes that will be the least disruptive on my family life. But, I don't always have a choice and I want to be a good colleague and so sometimes I have to teach the night class. I kick and scream while I do it, because that's a night I miss dinner and they're young and they go to bed. But, I also recognize my colleagues without kids don't necessarily want to be here at night either. So, I think more carefully about all of it.

I think I've grown. When my daughter was a newborn, I was mid-way through tenure-track. So, I still had that "I must do” mentality. I had that pressure of getting tenure but I didn’t have as much administrative work, so that felt different – it was a different kind of pressure.

I'm in a very, very fortunate place where I haven't felt that I am perceived of as different from a heterosexual parent. In my department, I've been treated the same way that heterosexual parents are. In my own experience as a faculty member, I haven't personally experienced my sexuality being that prominent in how it affects me. I honestly don't think being a lesbian has
detracted from my faculty mother role. In a lot of different ways, I think being a mother has
shaped my career more. I remember well when I told folks more senior to me that I was
pregnant. I think it definitely came as a surprise to them; I don't think it was on their radar
screen that I was going to be working out being a mom in my career plans. But, it was handled
very well. I think it was just the “Oh, we hadn't thought about that necessarily.” But, probably
many heterosexual moms have the same kind of reaction. It just made me chuckle more than
anything. And then there was very nice follow up afterward. So, again, I personally have not
seen it as a detraction at all. I really haven't.

My research goes right along with who I am and I think it enhances my teaching. I am a
very lucky person in that I have been in such a supportive environment where I have been able to
oftentimes forget that our family is different from other families. I think it would be interesting
to talk with students and ask how it affects their perceptions. I would be curious; because I think
sometimes I walk around kind of in a little bubble. Like I’ve said, I intentionally talk about my
family in class, so, that has helped sustain my work and my research. But yet I don't often think
about it in my day-to-day. Do the people I work with? Maybe. I don't know.

My family is all over my office. Pictures of my partner. My kids. Us together. When
students walk in my office and see family pictures, what do they think? I don't know. I don't
know but I'm sure it has to make some kind of difference. It's not why the pictures are there; the
pictures are there because they're my family, so I put their pictures in my office. I know there is
that additional benefit, that it reminds them that some family structures are different – that they
see the possibility of same-sex families with children, but I don’t really think about that. They’re
my family and their pictures are there for me while I work.
Tenure and Promotion

I have had wonderful colleagues. Pre-tenure they helped protect me, they helped me focus on what I needed to do to achieve tenure. I had other responsibilities, but not like I do now. I’ve probably repressed a lot of this. Back then, I knew I needed to publish, because there was that thing I had to do: I had to get tenure.

Being a lesbian hasn’t really affected my tenure and promotion. Being a lesbian wasn’t something I even thought about in the tenure process. The bigger impact for me was the timing of having kids and figuring out how all of that works. Being a mother, the process took longer and I was doing my writing at odd hours.

Benefits and Family-Friendly Policies

With both children, I took 12 weeks off. Six of those weeks were paid and then I used sick days for the rest. Prior to that, I didn’t even know faculty members had sick days, but I learned that we did. So I used them and took the full 12 weeks. When my daughter was born in July, 12 weeks would have had me coming back in November. Although I didn’t go right back into the classroom. In fact, my department chair had me come back and do curriculum work. So, I was eased in. And then it was full-steam ahead the next semester. I’m grateful for my supportive department.

My son was due in January; he was due to be born anytime soon after the semester started. Living an hour away, I really didn’t want to be driving every day when he could have popped out at any moment. So, the department let me stay home and work and it wasn’t counted against my leave-time. That didn’t cut into the 12 weeks. So, my colleagues were wonderful, they were very flexible with me. Compared to a lot of other people’s experiences that I’ve heard, I was treated extremely well.
I chose to stop my tenure clock after my daughter was born. That was in my fourth year. At my university, you go up for tenure at the end of your fifth year, so I had one more year and would have been going up for tenure. There was a point that I was stressing over whether to take the extra year or not, and a senior faculty member told me, “This is going to be a blip in your life. In a few years from now, you’re not going to care if you stopped the clock or not.” And she was right. So I extended the tenure clock out an additional year. I took an extra year, because I did not want to sacrifice time with my family.

But I don’t even remember all of these details around tenure anymore, I'm sure I've repressed part of that. I think it is probably a survival tactic. I don't remember it being horrible. Now that I think about it, the last year before I went up for tenure was tough with my last two publications. They don’t give you a specific number of publications to get tenure, but I knew I needed a couple more. I was strongly encouraged to get a couple more publications. So, during the extra year I took I don’t remember all of my experiences as a mother. I’m sure I was with my daughter a lot. I can remember it was a hard year, but I don’t remember many details of it. I’m sure I willed her to take a nap so that I could go work. I’m sure I started to work the minute she fell asleep. I’m sure I worked at night. And I’m sure my partner was wonderful. I do remember her being very helpful. I needed help all weekend. That year was tough. I have repressed that, but I don't want that moving forward. Like, I don't want to keep recreating that experience and having that becoming our norm.

I got official word of my tenure on the day I brought my son home from the hospital. Bringing him home totally trumped tenure. It was pretty funny. They told me over the phone and I basically said “Ok, that’s great. I’ve got to go.”

As a lesbian, nothing was different for me here, policy-wise, respect-wise. Never. I had
really, really good colleagues who treated me and my family no different than another family. Taking leave and stopping the tenure clock was all very routine; no problem. Sexuality didn't play into either policy. I was able to just easily use the university policy in each case.

However, in some ways, such as benefits and some of those troubles, there are things that some other heterosexual faculty members wouldn’t have to worry about. My partner isn’t on my health care benefits because those benefits would be taxed to her and ultimately it doesn’t pay off. We pay in a whole lot in terms of benefits. So, there are ways that I think I'm not reaping the reward that many other families do, in terms of really good benefits that can come along with being a faculty member, but I don't know how much that affects my role as a faculty member. It is just that there is something that I wish we had, like the health care benefits.

Messages

I’m a pretty confident person; I don’t worry about other people’s perceptions about my being a lesbian faculty mother. Additionally though, I've implicitly received the message that my being a lesbian faculty mother is wonderful. Nobody has explicitly said, "Oh it's wonderful that you are a lesbian faculty mother." Nobody said “Yay, go lesbian mother;” it was more like “This is great, one of our colleagues had a baby.” My department threw a baby shower for me; they celebrated it. When I came back to the office after my maternity leaves, my children’s pictures were hanging up in the office. The message was just that one of the faculty members had a baby. So, it was very positive and celebratory for both the children. It was very important to me that I did not ask for special favors because I'm a mother, because I don't think that's fair. For example, saying I will only teach during certain times or what not, because I want to respect that other people have lives as well. So I think that contributed to something.

Recently I have been struggling a lot because I have had a lot of administrative work and it
has been really challenging the past few years. I made the choice then not to do as much writing, and I am just now trying to get back into more writing, and everything has just felt a little out of whack. But my department chair specifically said to me, “You know, it's not like the old days where you had to always sacrifice your family if you wanted to be successful in your career. We need to figure out a way that you can do both.” So that is the message I was told, let’s figure out how you can do both. And that was coming from a mother of two who has worked very hard to make all that work, who values her time with her kids. I'm in a wonderful department with really good colleagues. And my department chair is really trying to create the culture in our department that we can do both family and career. I think, for the most part, that is how I’ve experienced the culture. It doesn’t mean every year is easy, and sometimes there’s just a whole lot of stuff that has to get done. But the struggle is recognized.

I have been careful to prevent special treatment from happening. As faculty members, I think all of our time should be respected as much as possible. I have excellent colleagues, and I have appreciated that we try to respect everyone’s time when we can. If we have a faculty member who is struggling, someone else tries to pitch in more. If one of my kids is sick and someone needs to step in to help me with something, they will. If someone who doesn’t have a child but has a sick relative needs something, we try to support them. So, I don’t really get treated differently from other faculty members who aren’t parents. We all just try to support each other. And I have not felt any different treatment from faculty members who aren’t lesbian. Given the culture and the values of my department, I haven’t felt different. The values of our department are social justice and inclusivity and I’ve seen them played out.

Support

As a faculty member with two kids, and I live an hour away from my university, I
definitely need a lot of support at home. I'm very hands on. If it were up to me, I would be with my kids all the time. But that's not reality. But, my partner gets it. I don’t want to make gender-based stereotypes in terms of support. I don’t want to say “the other mom is just as hands on and we can make it work” because you there are of course many dads who are just as hands on. So, I don’t necessarily think it is as much about my sexual orientation impacting my faculty mother experience as it is about our partnership. I have a very supportive partner and we work well as a team in terms of childcare.

I get support at home. I have a very patient partner who puts up with me. I couldn't do what I'm doing if I didn't have someone who understands that I've got a lot of demands pulling on me. So, I definitely get support at home; the greatest support for how I am actually able to do this is at home. I’m also supported by my department chair. She listens when I'm saying “I can't do this anymore, this isn't working,” and she works with me to try to make it work better. My colleagues support me. The support at work has changed over time. Pre-tenure, the support was helping me get tenure. Now, I feel like the support is, “Now that you’ve got so many different things, how are we going to help you manage your job without sacrificing your family?” So, it's two different kinds of support.

Kate: The Whole Tenure Debacle

My wife and I have been together for about 30 years. When civil unions became legal in our state, we got one, and that converted automatically to a marriage when the Supreme Court ruling was made in 2015. I’ve been a faculty member at my university for approximately 12 years now.

My wife and I did not really have a lot of control over decisions around how we became parents. After having undergone fertility treatments that didn’t work while I was also in the
process of applying for jobs, we realized that we weren’t going to get pregnant and decided to adopt. Once I got this position, after about a year, we decided to look into the logistics. We searched for adoption agencies that did not discriminate against lesbians or people who were adopting at an age older than the typical adoptive parents seemed to be. One organization stood out and we applied. It took a little less than a year for us to get matched up with our first child.

Prior to adopting my children, some people had done work on campus to make sure people could get parental leave for adoption. I was a beneficiary of that activism. I took maternity leave for the adoption of both of my children, who we adopted as infants. Both leaves were prior to my earning tenure. And no one officially gave me any grief about those leaves. However, unofficially, I believe that being a lesbian who asked for not just one, but two, parental leaves was at the very least problematic in the mind of Alice Chair (a.k.a. Dr. Chair).

A senior colleague who had adopted advised me to ask the outgoing chair rather than waiting for the incoming chair, Dr. Chair, who would likely be less amenable to granting the leave. The way the policy was put in place, there was a lot of room for individual interpretation on the part of department chairs. I got lucky; I got good advice about asking the outgoing chair, and it worked out as the outgoing chair verbally approved my leave. When I later went to Dr. Chair to discuss leave, she asked me, “Are you sure you want to do this?” Fortunately for me at the time, I didn’t really understand her subliminal message, which was, “If you do this, I’m not going to like it, and I will retaliate.” So, I very naively answered her question at face value and said, “Well, yeah, I want to do it.” Indeed, I wanted to take advantage of the policy available to me. I mean, no moron would say “no thank you” to leave, right? At any time, for a hangnail, much less for a child. I didn’t realize that Dr. Chair was horrified, because she thought my leave would cause problems for her.
So, I took two paid Family Medical Leave Act leaves. I didn’t really plan to take two leaves in that timing. After we adopted our first child, we hoped for another child, but we thought there was no way it was ever going to happen. And then we got the phone call about our second child. Here we were in the impossibly lucky scenario that the birth mother of our first child had another child who she wanted us to adopt. Of course, we were delighted and thrown into a tailspin. So, we scurried around and we said “yes!” And I asked for another maternity leave.

My department was supportive; some people were supportive. I have noticed that for some other people in our department, life events from births to deaths of family members received more official notice than mine. That has been hurtful. But, there was no official difference between me and anyone else who requested leave for any reason. I got the leave. I was incredibly grateful at the time. It was fantastic. But, it did come back to haunt me in ways that are immeasurable. No one ever said to me, “I’m giving you grief around tenure because you took two maternity leaves”; but my belief is that it made a difference to at least one person who later made my tenure bid more difficult than it might otherwise have been. In their mind, I had the temerity to ask for two maternity leaves and still expect to attain tenure.

Some time prior to submitting my material for promotion and tenure, Dr. Chair ostensibly got her back up about the way a graduate student’s academic progress had gone. Dr. Chair claimed that I had misrepresented the will of the student’s committee. So, I apologized for what was truly a non-issue and told Dr. Chair and the other members of the committee that I had not meant any disrespect. I also assured the committee members that the student understood the issue and how she should move forward. After my apology, some of the other committee members contacted me and told me they believed my apology was unnecessary, that I had not
done anything wrong. I felt vindicated by their response. I had chosen to be apologetic and
deferential rather than nasty and defensive. And I believed this minor situation to be resolved at
that point.

However, when I came up for tenure, a colleague came to me and said, “Kate, what
happened? You need to explain it to me, because these people are waging a campaign against
your tenure and I need to know how to respond. Can you tell me what happened?” So, I told
him. And I don’t know what happened behind closed doors, except what was reported to me by
the acting chair at the time, because Dr. Chair was on leave. The acting chair, Richard Acting
Chair (a.k.a. Dr. Dick), said, “I just want you to know that I have had to submit your tenure bid
as a no. The departmental vote was primarily ‘yes,’ but I am putting it forward to the promotion
and tenure committee as a ‘no’ because I have decided that your teaching is not up to par.” So, I
said to myself, “Oh shit, this is bad!”

I had never stopped the tenure clock, although that was an option. There was no reason
to. My research met tenure criteria. I had a published book as well as a book contract. If they
tried to get rid of me for not meeting criteria, it would not have worked. No one in a million
years could have argued that my research was subpar. My teaching evaluations were good, with
just a minor blip during the semesters of my leaves, when I thought I was being a departmental
good citizen by team teaching with graduate students who needed team teaching experience in
order to begin teaching on their own. So, we collaboratively designed the syllabi and I mentored
them for the weeks prior to my leave. During those semesters, some of my evaluations dipped
from 5s toward 4s. Team-taught courses always get lower evaluations. There is not a legitimate
reason anywhere in my record to deny me tenure. But, Dr. Dick tried to get me denied tenure,
and my suspicion is that the motive was actually that I had asked for and received parental leave twice.

But, thankfully, the promotion and tenure committee voted in favor of my tenure bid even though it had gone from the department as a no, which almost never happens. Then the dean and provost went in my favor and it went right on down the line. So, I did get tenure.

I later found out that Dr. Dick had been a problem for other people on campus. I had talked with some other queer people on campus and another lesbian told me that at one point, Dr. Dick had been in a position to offer her an academic job. She accepted and some days later, he called her back and said, “I recant that offer. I want to take that offer back, and if you ever tell anybody about this, I will tell everyone that you’re lying about my offer. And they will believe me. They will believe me because you’re a lesbian.”

I have no reason to doubt the person who told me this story. She is fine where she is now. She has a lot of respect in the university. She has a very powerful job. She has no reason to misrepresent what Dr. Dick did. So, I realized Dr. Dick is a bad actor. He is an overt homophobe, and he is in the vast minority of people in my department. When I applied for this job, I had a lesbian-focused manuscript in progress, I presented a sample syllabus for teaching an LGBTQ-focused course, and I used the words “lesbian” and “queer” in my job talk. I got the job anyway.

I think one of my defense mechanisms, a strategy that keeps me alive, is that I forget that there are some demographic reasons for which someone might choose to dislike me. I just forget. So, it surprises me every time it happens. The whole situation was really unpleasant. Do I have any evidence that it had anything to do with me being a lesbian? Absolutely not! Am I confident that it had everything to do with my being a lesbian? I am absolutely confident that it
had to do with demographics! In their minds, lesbians are well and good if they just stay where they belong and lay subordinate. And that is not how it went. It was not very explicitly about my being a lesbian. To my mind, there are lots of little bits of evidence that this was hostility and aggression and it had everything to do with my being a lesbian and having the audacity to accept benefits that were offered to other straight parents and having the audacity to disagree with Dr. Chair in public about something related to my field in the instance of the graduate student committee issue.

The whole tenure debacle was horrifying, horrifying, horrifying! It felt terrible to go to the department for quite a long time. I didn’t even want to go to the building. And that is too bad, because the majority of people there supported me and went out of their way to make sure that this act of hostility didn’t go all the way to my not attaining tenure. The department as a whole supported me, and there were a couple of people who went after me in ways that they could. I was vulnerable. I think I was more vulnerable than someone else might have been, because I was a lesbian. That kind of bias happens, not because people deserve it, but because it is bias. But, in the end, I am still here and I am an associate professor now.

**Teaching**

To be totally idealistic, I teach with an eye toward making the world a better place. When I can, I make politics clear, and I expose queer themes in literature, and I say out loud that authors are queer or gay or lesbian, even if it isn’t obvious from the text depending on what I am teaching. I think it makes the world better and bigger for people who might be sitting in my class feeling invisible. Depending on the class, people may or may not know that I am a lesbian.
People assume that my children are adopted because we are not the same race, but having adopted children does not necessarily tell people that I’m queer.

Being a lesbian absolutely changes the way I teach; so does being a mother. Making the world a better place becomes a little bit more urgent if you’re making it a better place, in part, for your own children. Being a mother motivates my commitment and/or the intensity of my commitment to do a good job with young people who are going out to shape the world. I want students to be critical thinkers and critical writers. I want them to think. That is all that really matters to me. And it probably matters a little more to me as a mother than it would as a non-parent.

I mention my children in class, not constantly, but I do – for specific pedagogical reasons. On occasion, my children have come to class with me because I’m juggling this, that, and the other thing. So, sometimes they have come to class with me. They’re big enough to sit in the back and color or look at their iPhone and be silent or not disruptive. So, I don’t hesitate for a second to take them to school. Also, I have some institutional security now. I feel a little bit defiant if I need to bring my kid to class – she won’t be disruptive and that’s what I need to do, so that is what is going to happen. This is who I am. You hired me and you tenured me and this is who I am. So, if anyone has a problem with it, get over yourself! So, yes, I feel a little defiant when I bring them to campus. But, I’m also ridiculously proud of them, so it feels good for people to meet them.

In practice, I had the opportunity to extend family leave to graduate students who became pregnant while I was the graduate director. It was not policy; it was up to the interpretation of the individual department. I finagled and finessed and asked the right people and said the right
things. And since I have been the graduate chair, everyone who has become pregnant has gotten parental leave. I have been pleased that I was able to pull that off on my watch.

Research

The whole tenure debacle knocked me off my peg with regard to my research and I backed way off what I was doing. I refigured everything. I’m working on a book right now, which is not something my department supports. It is a different genre so they are telling me they’re not going to promote me. Some people have told me that this book will not count toward my promotion to full. I have had to launch a defense in my head about the legitimate move to switch genres to make an intervention into the political debates about gay marriage. This genre matches this particular moment in queer politics.

Choosing the genre that matches my aesthetic and intellectual goals is the advantage of tenure, right? And if you’re not going to promote me to full professor on that, I disagree. Fine, I will do something else in my next book project. I have one planned. But, if I don’t get promoted to full for doing this research project, I will suspect strongly that it involves racism and homophobia. I will write a different book next time, but I decided that if, after tenure, I don’t have the courage to risk writing what I want, that is totally wimpy. I should be able to use the security of tenure to write what I want. I have to stand up to my own judgment. So, I have said to these people who thought they were warning me about what I should write, “Well then, all the more reason to finish it quickly and move on to something else.” Which, I’m in the process of doing, and it is slower than it might be if I didn’t have kids, but, that is what I am doing.

Being a mother affects the timing of different career decisions and publication. The older my children get, the less scheduling restrictions I have, which makes everything easier. They get themselves to and from school. So, that is a huge amount of reduction in the stress of the
schedule. And as they have gotten older, they are more independent. They walk to school, walk home, get their own snacks, and do their homework.

**Identities in Academia**

Being a mother makes me feel like I am in community with other people on campus with whom I can have conversations about our children. Some parents have a more natural lens with more warmth toward other parents. On the reverse side, there are some people in our queer professional community who are still somewhat hostile toward lesbians who choose to be parents, given the understandable fight there was for women to be able to choose not to be parents. It is the legacy of that intergenerational battle. I feel that sort of disdain from some people on campus. Like, “what are you doing? You’re undermining the work of a whole generation of feminists by being a mother.” And I just have to pretend I don’t feel their disdain. So, I am their ally anyway. I’ve just learned to keep my mouth shut about my kids around them, which isn’t always intuitive, because my children are a big part of my life.

Being a faculty member and being a mother are at odds with each other for the most part. It is having two jobs. It is a lot. Being a queer faculty member requires 100% of your attention. So does being a mother. So, when you do both, you don’t do either one as well. Or maybe you do both of them better. I don’t know. But, in terms of time, I feel like no matter what I am doing, I am not doing the other thing. So, it is a real material problem. It doesn’t go away just because you prefer that there weren’t conflicts about time or just because you know that both roles are valuable and that you love being a faculty member and being a mother. The material reality that it is a real conflict doesn’t go away. I think non-queer mothers would say the same thing, it is a real conflict. But we all muddle along. And maybe it makes us better writers, or
more efficient with our time in general, but honestly, that is only a partial truth. Efficiency only speaks to so many problems.

Being a faculty member has a positive impact on my experience as a queer mother, though. We live in a very affluent neighborhood. A mono-cultural neighborhood, with a lot of very educated people, and a lot of very educated stay-at-home moms. At the elementary school, everyone comes and drops the kids off and chit chats. Often, both parents come and drop off the kids. Most of the mothers who drop off at the elementary school are 20 years younger than me. Everyone drives their four and five children in their gargantuan vehicles. And I feel like an alien from Mars with my obviously adopted kids, and as a lesbian, and as an older person. Our neighborhood is lovely and people are friendly, but I don’t think that our children get the kinds of invitations that other kids get because people are afraid of us. The parents are afraid of us. It isn’t like anyone is mean or nasty, I just feel quite alien. I think our children’s social life is affected by the homophobia and the racism of the people around us, even though it isn’t hostile, it just isn’t intimate.

But then, every now and then, my kids come with me to campus and see a room full of people sit and want to hear what I have to say. On occasion, there are big events. I’ve been given an award on a stage in front of hundreds of people. And because of these experiences, my kids think, “huh, this is a world where my mother has cultural capital.”

So, I have cultural capital as a university professor in a way that I do not have cultural capital as a second-class mom – a mom who didn’t give birth, a mom who doesn’t have White kids, a mom who is older, a mom who is a lesbian. On the playground or in the elementary school drop-off, I don’t have cultural capital. At the university I do. When my kids come home
from whenever they go to the university with me, it is really nice because they think, “hmmm, I
guess you are somebody!”

So, being a faculty parent definitely makes it easier for me to stomach being a queer
parent in an affluent, snooty neighborhood. It is an incredibly safe and lovely neighborhood, but
those measures of cultural capital really resonate. I feel them. I’m glad that I get to live in the
university world also, and that my kids get to see me in that other world, where the markers of
cultural capital are quite different and I am in a different position. I’m glad for that.

Also, the faculty schedule lets me send my kids off to school and then go to work and be
home when they get home. I’m not a stay-at-home mom, but I have a lot of the benefits they
have, assuming I am willing to put off and do my work in between and betwixt and sometimes
do it half-assed.

Messages

I have gotten the whole range of messages about my identity as a lesbian faculty mother.
From “Yay, congratulations, your baby was born!” to sort of being ignored. The big hoopla that
was made over other people’s children being born wasn’t the same as the energy I received. No
one was overtly hostile though. Some people were very encouraging, while others, like Alice
Chair, were discouraging.

My graduate students know my family. They are more likely than the undergraduate
students to assume that some people adopt kids and that sometimes they are queer, and that it is
all fine. My identity is a non-issue with the graduate students. I had a meeting with a graduate
student recently in which she ended up being visibly distressed about her own work-life balance.
She has a baby and she was crying. I was able to sit down and comfort her. We talked about
how you work with a baby. So, my personal experience helped me communicate with her, and
she was probably more willing to talk with me about her own experience than if I didn’t also have kids.

My partner and I have been together for almost 30 years. For all of that time, I have either been a student or been teaching. The assumption is that as a faculty person, you have a more amenable schedule to parenthood, so we decided that I would do the heavy-lifting in terms of the kids’ schedules. So, I do. I have a more flexible schedule. She has the kind of job in which she has to be physically present 40 hours per week. And I have the kind of job in which I put in the hours and, except for class schedules, I can start and stop my work whenever I need to. When I am teaching, if the kids need something, she takes the day off. But, for the most part, I can rearrange my schedule for most of our children’s needs. My department has been incredibly supportive about scheduling my teaching between 9 am and 2 pm, which I appreciate. That is a necessary part of my being able to juggle everything.

I have full confidence that there is some way in which being queer and a parent ties you to the body and not to the mind in a certain logic. That double-handed association with things of the body and not of the mind impacts me from two directions. There are faculty members who are parents who are given the benefit of the doubt more readily than I am in terms of the legitimacy of their intellectual work and the legitimacy of their writing choices. I try not to get too discouraged and just respond by producing more than I would otherwise. Additionally, I have to remind myself that I need to be willing to take intellectual risks post-tenure. All I risk is not getting promoted to full professor and a salary bump. That is a pretty low risk in comparison to some of the other risks I have taken in my life.

In this way, I have to defend my intellectual credentials more than I would if those ties weren’t being made somewhere along the line in someone’s evaluation of my work. But
addressing that is so amorphous that to fight against it is just a matter of doing more to defend your scholarship, and writing more. So, that’s what I am doing.

**Support**

Over time, I have become aware that I cannot just assume that support will always be there. I think that when I was younger, I assumed that of course people would support me. As I’ve gotten older, I have realized that I have been lucky in that regard. As a young graduate student, the overlap between my academics and queerness shocked some people. I have primarily lived in geographical areas where overt hostility was not the norm. But, over time, the percentage of people who are actively supportive has increased. People have gotten more supportive professionally and I am more aware that I was lucky to have as much support as I did when I was younger. And I continue to be lucky in the ways that people have either supported me or at least not actively stood in my way.

There are other queer parents on campus. We have some camaraderie with them. I’m White and our children are Black, so, visually, even if no other way, we have allies in people who are doing anti-racist work on campus. Those people might be more visible and active allies of mine as a queer parent because of the multiple-race nature of our family than they might be if I were not a parent. We might have more solidarity around anti-racist work than anti-homophobic work. Although the overlap between people who do anti-racist and anti-homophobic work is very substantial on campus. So, as a result, I have this subset of people who are allies. Additionally, I benefitted from the labor of other queer parents who worked for parental leave on campus.

I am supported by people in my writing group, my partner, some of my colleagues, and some of my neighbors. My writing group meets a couple of times each month and we share our
scholarship. We offer feedback and they don’t hesitate to help me make my scholarship better. A couple of the other members are also parents. Some of them are straight and some of them are queer.

My partner supports me in making a horrible commute to and from her job every day and when she gets home she does whatever she can with the kids. She is there for us. She picks up the slack when I have writing group or other things. She takes over. She is always willing to step in to enable to me to my job, to see my writing group, to do the extra things when they fit in. She makes it possible by picking up the slack. She listens to me talk about my book. She does all those things that partners do.

Liz: STEM Trailblazer

As a lesbian, the university where I work has a very supportive environment. The university has a really good reputation and welcoming policies in place, which is why it was at the top of our list in my job search. The city is a really nice place to live. I’ve been at the university for about 6 years. In general, being a lesbian has affected me as a faculty member. I work in a male-dominated, STEM field. It is controversial that I’m a woman, so to be a lesbian is just one step further out there. I’ve found that to be difficult. Add on to that that I am a mother as well and people are like, “I’ve never seen anything like this before.” So, I think that has been a challenge.

But, I think just being a lesbian in general has been the most difficult part. There is only one other person in my college who is openly queer. I’m a little trailblazer. And then, once you step outside the university, you have no protections whatsoever. So, I’m out to my colleagues at my university and I bring my family to departmental events; for the most part, people here are
supportive. But, when I go to conferences in countries outside the U.S., I have to be a lot more guarded.

I work in a medium-sized department – there are approximately 30 faculty members. My department is split. One half of the department is what you would think of as more of a “soft science” – there are a lot of women in that field and that half of the department is about half men, half women. My half of the department is what people think of as more of a “hard science” – there are less women in my side of the department. At one time, there was only me and one other woman.

My job is my job. I teach my classes; I teach the classes I’m expected to teach. That doesn’t follow me home. The same thing with my research, I don’t carry that home with me. The stress follows me: stress about coming up for tenure, stress about publishing papers. All of that. It follows me home and it does affect my relationship with my wife. Maybe even, to some extent, with my son. It is a difficult job.

The message is: “You can’t have a baby on the tenure clock.” Even though I know women who had babies and they’re doing fine. There is still a stigma. At the time that we were considering becoming parents, I was very fearful of there being some sort of repercussion with having a baby and being on the tenure-clock. The climate varies so much from department to department, but, on the whole it seems like you shouldn’t have a baby on the tenure-track.

**Teaching**

I teach undergraduate and graduate classes that range from small to about 70 students. They’re very theoretical classes. In teaching graduate students, because I am young, I find that it is hard for me to establish myself as the expert in the room. The undergraduate students seem to respond well to my teaching, but in the graduate classes, students seem to challenge my authority
Being a lesbian never factors into how or what I teach, because it is a hard science. It’s by the book. There isn’t much room for interpretation. Being a mother doesn’t bear weight in decisions about what I teach, but it does tend to affect things like my course policies. I think I am more accommodating because I am a mother. If a student can’t make it to an exam because something has come up with their kids, I am more understanding whereas some of my colleagues might be a bit more rigid. For students who have children, I’m more flexible in my attendance policies. I’m also flexible with myself. If I need to take time off work, I have no regrets about having to do so.

I do find that students come to me with things that aren’t specifically course-related. I think part of that is just because I’m a woman and they feel that it is easier to talk to me. I’ve talked with students who have had children. We talk about how our kids are and about balancing school and family. There have been times when I’ve had to bring my son to work and sometimes when my students have had to bring their kids to class; so we have an understanding about those kinds of things.

Research

Being a lesbian has no effect on my research or publication decisions. Being a mother doesn’t affect my publications or the type of research that I do, but it does affect some of the opportunities that I have pursued. I try not to let being a mom affect my productivity at work, even if it means that I’m miserable and scrambling to try to make it work. The bar is high; it doesn’t change just because you’re a parent. My publications have to be in high-impact, peer-reviewed journals. In addition to publishing papers, I have to present at conferences, so I’m
writing conference papers too. So, I have spent several years working whenever I could to keep my publication rate up with people who might not have children.

**Service**

Everything is pretty equitable in my department, except for committees – they seem to give them all to me. Service makes up probably about half of what I actually end up doing. I got assigned to be on five committees in my department this semester. I’m chairing one of them. And I’m also on a college-wide committee. This is in addition to my professional service; I’m associate editor for a journal. Your job should be about 50% research, 40% teaching, and 10% service. Mine feels like it is literally 50% research, 50% teaching, and 50% service. There was a period of time when I was pre-tenure, doing all the admissions and advising for all 40 Master’s students in our program. That was on top of committees I was serving on.

A lot of that has to do with the fact that I am a woman and women tend to do more service. And it is also because I do a good job with my service, so they just keep piling more on me. They know I will say yes. So, they just keep giving it to me. I was talking to a senior colleague recently and she said I should get out of some of the service I’m doing, that it isn’t fair. But, I like service. I don’t mind it. But I do see that my high level of service puts me at a disadvantage at times.

**Motherhood**

Being a faculty member is challenging, it is very demanding. It requires your attention 24 hours a day. Even if I’m not sitting at my computer, my mind is still going and thinking about work. Even in the middle of a Sunday afternoon, if I pull out my phone, I’m checking my email. You have to be on all the time. Very early on, I made a commitment to my wife that I would not bring work home with me. I have done pretty well with that. I do check my email
when I’m at home, but I don’t typically pull out my laptop. I don’t work on notes for class or anything like that unless it is super early in the morning before anyone else is awake. I try not to let being a faculty member impact my home life too much.

Being a faculty member affects family decisions. First of all, who is going to get pregnant? During the year that I started here, we decided that we wanted a family, and I said, “I can’t carry a baby because I’m on the tenure-track. I can’t do that.” So, my partner ended up carrying the baby. When we decided that we wanted a second child, I said, “I’m coming up for tenure, I can’t carry a baby.” So, my partner tried. She ended up not getting pregnant, so then I tried to get pregnant. We went through all this infertility nonsense, and neither of us got pregnant, so we decided to try foster care. Being a faculty member affected those really important decisions, even the decision to have a kid. I was really reluctant; I kept telling my partner, “No, not until I get tenure,” because there is so much stigma of having a child while you’re on the tenure-track. And I didn’t know how that would be perceived since I’m a lesbian.

So, those were all really difficult things to deal with early on, but now it is normal life.

Being a mom is challenging because it constrains your time. Before I had a kid, I could work from the time I woke up until the time I went to bed and not think twice about it. Now that I have a child and he is in daycare from 9-5, I have from 9-5 to work. So, I have become a lot more efficient as a faculty member. You lose a lot of time to things like kids getting sick. So, you kind of have to get used to those interruptions. Having a kid changes everything completely. I travel a lot, but now that I am a parent, I constrain that travel a bit. I don’t take as many trips as I might have before. I try not to go on extended trips. I’m expected to travel to several conferences per year. So, I make a few international trips each year. It isn’t easy for me to leave
for a week, not only to be away from my son, but also to leave my partner as a single mother. It is really unfair, so that has created some stress at home, I think.

Over time, being a mom has gotten easier in some ways and more difficult in others, even with my son’s development. Raising an infant versus raising a toddler versus raising a school-aged kid is all very different. As my son gets older, he becomes more independent and requires less close care.

There is a lot of work and there are a lot of opportunities that are missed because you can’t travel as much or stay after work to go to events. But, in the grand scheme of things, it doesn’t have such a significant negative effect. If I had to weigh advantages versus disadvantages, being a mom is more often an advantage.

**Identities in Academia**

I am definitely young. Some of my friends think I am the youngest tenured professor in the college. I went straight from Bachelor’s to Master’s to Ph.D. to Assistant Professor to Associate Professor in about the minimum time that one could do that. It was a pretty straight trajectory for me. I didn’t do a post-doc, I didn’t get experience in the industry, none of that. I’ve heard that some departments won’t even consider someone for a tenure-track job unless they’re over the age of 30, and I started here at 27. I do have some peers who are about five years older than me, so there isn’t a huge generation gap. I also have the senior, senior colleagues as well. But, my department is relatively young.

That became an issue when I would go to conferences and trying to establish myself as an expert. I would go introduce myself to senior people in the field and tell them what I was working on and they would blow me off like I was a grad student or something. So, that was the most difficult part: being a woman and being young. It was really hard to make a name for
myself. But, you have to be persistent and do good work and put yourself out there and network and keep getting up there and giving talks and volunteering to do things. People start to notice you.

I do all of the research, teaching, and service and still work 9-5. It is crazy, but I have some way of making it work. I go through spurts of productivity and just tackle the things that need to be done. I’m just really efficient in what I do. The year that I came up for tenure, I got national or international awards for my teaching, my research, and my service. I sometimes wonder how it works out.

The only benefit of my being a lesbian as a faculty member is that it has made me more compassionate toward other people. To be honest, I can’t think of any other benefit. What it does for me is that it puts me in a bit of an uneasy situation, because the lines are blurred between what is academic vs. personal. Being a faculty member isn’t like other professions where you work your 9-5 and then you go home. You’re doing events with students after hours and people bring their families. It puts me in an awkward position, because my family is important to me, so I want to include them. But, at the same time, I am putting myself out there and bringing my family to these events and there is a kind of resistance in my not knowing how students interpret everything. On the surface, everyone seems accepting, but you never know if something else is going on. Some of my colleagues are really friendly and helpful and other colleagues are distant and cool. I don’t know what the source of that is, but I can only imagine that it has something to do with me being lesbian and a mom.

The faculty members in my department are relatively young. So, a lot of people have small children; it is a really family-friendly department. There’s not the expectation that you need to be working on a Friday night at 11 pm. I know that at other universities or in other
departments, it can be controversial for a woman to have a child, but in my department, everyone has kids. So, there is no problem when I need to leave work at 5 o’clock to go pick my son up from school. There is no issue with the fact that I am a parent. I find that it is easier for me to be open about being a parent than it is to be open about being a lesbian. When people see a picture of my son in my office and as how things are going, I have no issue talking about him. In my department, if I didn’t have a kid, I would feel kind of left out because so many people do have kids.

So, being a mom has been helpful for building a relationship with some of my peers. It has given me networking opportunities. I know people in other departments who have kids and our relationship was established through non-work related things, but it has opened up opportunities at work. Even outside of the university, in terms of networking at conferences, being a mom has been helpful in establishing relationships. It isn’t controversial for me to be a parent, because everybody has kids. So, being a mom has been helpful in those ways.

**Tenure and Promotion**

When it came time for me to go through the reappointment process (which we do during the third year), I had the opportunity to stop the tenure-clock and my colleagues advised me not to. I went and talked to my department chair at the time, and she said “Oh, you’ll be fine.” So, I didn’t stop the clock. When it came time for tenure, I had already decided I wasn’t going to stop the tenure-clock and my department chair (not the same chair who I’d asked previously) said, “Had you thought about . . . you could have stopped the clock.” And I thought, what!?! It was a little late for that. It would have been nice if someone had supported me. At the same time, I was hearing of male colleagues in other departments who were stopping the tenure-clock with no questions asked.
I felt like I wasn’t entitled to stop the tenure-clock because I wasn’t seen as a mom since I didn’t physically give birth to our son – even though we split our parenting duties 50/50. I think, because I am the second parent, that I am more like a dad in some way, even though as a parent in my household, I’m a mom. But I’m not really seen as a mom. I’m treated more like a dad, and dads are supposed to be workaholics with a wife who stays home to take care of the kids. I’ve had colleagues say, “Oh, your wife is at home with the kid, right?,” with the expectation that I’m not the mom. That is frustrating; it has been difficult to deal with.

Not stopping the tenure-clock hurt me in the end, because when I came up for tenure, I could have really benefitted from having that extra year. I just got really lucky that everything fell into place. I was publishing all these papers and grants and awards came in at the right time, everything came together. It was just by sheer luck that it worked out for me. I was very close to not making it because I was right on the borderline in terms of publications. Because of that, they looked at the trajectory; clearly I was in the right direction, so that made it easier for them to make the case for me for tenure. But, it was close.

So then, my committee wrote an overwhelming recommendation for tenure. That was approved by my department, went up to the college, from there the provost. I had people on my promotion and tenure committee tell me it was a joy to work on my case. So, I didn’t have any problems going through, but leading up to it was uncertain.

Once I made it through tenure, I felt like I had gotten the seal of approval. In effect, it is saying, “She’s ok, she’s doing really good work and has an international reputation.” Up until that point, no one had evaluated me that closely, so people didn’t have much of a clue how I was doing. I think a lot of people doubted that I would get tenure. Then when it came time to look at my CV, they were like, “Wow, I didn’t realize you were doing all this!” So, tenure is a defining
point where things become easier because you have that protection and seal of approval from the university. It is kind of like you can be yourself more after tenure. Now that I have tenure, I feel less pressure to be meeting milestones within a certain time period. I’ve been able to relax a little bit.

Now that I’m tenured, I have the luxury of being able to do some of the things that are important to me, but not related to my field. One of the things I’m hoping to start working on now is trying to improve the climate for students who have disabilities. In my experience with illness and how it has impacted me at work, I realize that it is difficult for students who have disabilities. Anyone who is different from the norm is at a disadvantage.

**Benefits and Family-Friendly Policies**

We get really good benefits through the university. I have job security. My job is very flexible. If I need to stay home from work or work from home, I can do that. During the summers, I have no obligations, so I work a lot at home (or the hours that I’m comfortable working). It isn’t rigid. The flexibility is huge.

I’m a faculty member at an institution that had a way of stepping around the state. There were state laws that wouldn’t allow people to receive same-sex partner benefits, but the university offered them. There are all kinds of family-friendly policies at the university: you can take modified duties if you have a baby (so you’re released from teaching), you can stop the tenure-clock, etc. Everything was pretty standard for me. I wasn’t treated any differently than my colleagues.

When I was interviewing, I didn’t say too much about my personal life because it was none of their business then. But, when I was hired here, we used the dual-career opportunities
that they have for finding employment for spouses. As soon as I was hired here, my partner came here to interview as well. So that was a big benefit for us.

Also, when my son was born, I took a few weeks off from work. But, he was born during the summer, so I didn’t do anything formal. It was a month during which I wasn’t getting paid anyway. After that, I took active service with modified duties for the following academic year, so I was released from one course. I requested modified duties, even though my partner carried our baby. I thought, well, I’m a new parent, I’m going to need some release from teaching.

A couple years later, my partner decided to go back to school. So, she quit her job and I put my wife and our son on my health insurance. It was good to be able to do that.

Foster care doesn’t seem to be treated as seriously as parenting. I found that it wasn’t viewed as equally as being a new parent. Maybe it’s because foster children aren’t your children in their eyes. We had two foster children for a while and we are in the process of fostering again. When we started doing foster care, no one even suggested to me that maybe I should consider modified duties or parental leave.

Messages

I haven’t really had negative things being said about or done toward me. I think most of that is done behind my back, if it is done at all. Like I said, I’ve had some colleagues who are distant toward me and I think it well may have to do with my being a lesbian. But, there have been some positive things that people have done as well. One of my colleagues threw us a baby shower and all my colleagues came. So, there have been really good things. We have been included. I can bring my family to departmental functions and I don’t feel uncomfortable doing so. For the most part, it has been positive more so than negative. The negative hasn’t been in
my face. My supervisor has been very supportive. My colleagues have been supportive for the most part.

My relationship with my wife is like a typical married couple. I don’t think it is much different from what you would see in other homes. I get criticism if I’m working too hard or not doing my household chores.

I don’t think my son really understands my role as a lesbian faculty mom. He knows I have a really cool job. He has been to my office and I’ve even taken him to class. But, I don’t think he really understands what I do. He knows I travel a lot, but he doesn’t understand why. They get to travel with me sometimes. I try to make it have the least amount of impact on my family as possible.

**Support**

I feel supported by my department and my department chair. It was fairly acceptable when I asked for modified duties. I felt supported at that time. For the most part, when it comes to needing time to do something with my family, I don’t feel criticized for that. In my department, I have access to all the resources that I need. I’m able to do my job. I have access to students to help with writing grants, teaching my classes, doing research. The administration has been supportive. The university is supportive.

It took me some time to feel comfortable in my job. So, I was a bit cautious with my colleagues and then they turned out to be more supportive than I initially thought. So, I think building relationships with people over time has made me feel more comfortable and feel more supported than I felt initially. My son was born a year after we came here. In that first year, I was just afraid to even tell people we were going to have a baby. But then it turned out that, well, here they wanted to throw us a baby shower. So, I feel comfortable now.
My students are supportive. I have a really good group of students working with me on research. And they know my family. They understand when I can’t email them back because there’s a crisis. They’re very understanding.

My family is supportive. They do everything for me. They tolerate me when I have to travel or when I have to work. When I’m stressed out, I talk to my wife and she gives me good ideas. They’re patient. I feel very supported at home. They came with me through this whole journey; I wouldn’t have been able to make it without them.

**ProfMean through the Years: A Queer Icon on Campus**

I finished graduate school and started my career at this university; this is the only job I’ve had after graduate school. I’ve been here for 31 years. I came here married to my husband because this university was the only place that made an offer to both of us. That’s why we came here. We weren’t in the same department. We both stayed after we separated, which was only a couple of years after we got here. We stayed here because we both wanted to be involved in raising our children.

We had some difficulty around the lesbian issue when we were first separated. My ex-husband suddenly decided that he had never heard of my being a lesbian before, even though I had been. He thought he was going to change me, but he didn’t. I tried to make it clear to him that you don’t just stop having certain feelings and interests, but he didn’t get it. There were certainly other problems in our marriage. I didn’t think he was much of a parent and that had caused a bunch of tension in our marriage after our children were born.

But, in terms of being here at the university, I separated from my husband and then fairly soon after, I started seeing a woman in the area. I was pretty open about telling people in my department. It wasn’t a secret. I’m a fairly butch person. Generally, people’s gaydar goes off
when they hang out with me. So I think it wasn’t too surprising to anyone when I started seeing
this woman after my husband and I separated.

In the university, there is a real difference between your department and the people you
work closely with every day. This was about 1986 and the university structure was not
particularly good for gay and lesbian people. That was before the days of partner benefits for
same-sex couples. We did eventually get that after a long fight, but the university was certainly
not a groundbreaker in that area – it took quite a while. So, there was a kind of institutional
discrimination. Many faculty who were gay or lesbian were unwilling to come out at that time
(and this is still true, I think, although less so), because they feared backlash in their departments.
Some departments were worse than others, but in the English department, there were other gay
and lesbian faculty and no one made a big deal about it; they were just there. Someone would
host a get-together at their house and their partner would be there. No one was hiding it. But,
there was no institutional support.

The departmental culture was comfortable. In fact, they used to call our department the
granola department because they said we were full of fruits, flakes, and nuts, which was kind of
true. Even today, I think departments of English are generally way more comfortable than for
instance the so-called hard sciences around queer issues among faculty and students. In the hard
sciences it seems to be mostly men who spend a lot of time measuring their equipment.

At the university, there was less interest in the fact that I was a faculty parent than there
was outside the university. The parenting role took place in its most obvious ways outside it. In
terms of having children and the university, there weren’t any particular issues around having the
kids, partly because they were my biological children. For instance, when it came time for my
son to go to college, there was no problem with the tuition waiver. It didn’t have anything to do
with my being a lesbian. So, I never had to deal with the things that some younger women have, such as – what do you do if you are not the biological parent but you are parenting a child with someone else? Does that count? I know that has come up for other people, but it didn’t for me because I am the bio-mom. Any problems that came up tended to be in other places, such as my daughter’s school, but not so much on campus.

I would say that being lesbian, and particularly being on the butch side of lesbian, has had some effect on my career at the university. In fact, my partner and I wrote an article about this. Butchness, because it partakes of the stereotypically male, can be kind of an advantage in an atmosphere like a university because you can claim a certain kind of power with it. I’m not saying that it is anything great and dramatic. But, being a lesbian, particularly a butch lesbian, did effect my career here in some ways.

Being a lesbian parent, I have always felt in some ways more connected to straight parents than to lesbian non-parents because of the things we did with the kids. I coached soccer all the way through my daughter’s high school experience. I coached baseball and basketball. I was always involved with the kids. And the other parents I was involved with were not gay parents, they were straight parents. The huge thing we had in common was our children. They all knew that I was a lesbian. There were connections in various ways, but being lesbian was not it.

And in fact, I didn’t have very much contact with other faculty members who were parents. Part of the reason for that was just chronological. When I came here I was still fairly young. I was 35, but my kids were already five- and ten-years old. The other people I came to know who were gay and had children tended to have younger children. They weren’t like me.
I had a one-year-old waiting outside the door for me when I came out of my oral exam in graduate school. I had one child before I went to graduate school and one child during graduate school. With 20/20 hindsight, having done this and looking back, I am really glad I did it that way. By the time I started working at the university, because my kids were five and ten, they were in school all day. There were big blocks of time that I hadn’t had before. For me, it was graduate school that was hard. I’ve never been so organized in my life as I was in graduate school. In order to get through graduate school, I had to be.

I’m sitting in my office right now, and as I look around I can see the things I’ve displayed. There are pictures of my partner and her sister, my son and daughter’s high school pictures, my granddaughter – lots of pictures of my kids and grandkids. I also have two bumper stickers up. One says “Sorry I missed church, I’ve been busy practicing witchcraft and becoming a lesbian” and the other one says “Beware of attack lesbian.” That is all here, including these two sort of lesbian things. I am open about it. But then, I teach this stuff. If you’re going to sign up for my queer studies class, it shouldn’t surprise you if I have something like that in my office.

**Historical Change**

Thirty years ago, if you were a lesbian or gay parent, you were a curiosity at the very least. For some it was worse than that, they might have been spoken scornfully of or insulted. Over time that has really changed, the level of openness and of course changes in the law. I think of *Lawrence v. Texas* and the end of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, and finally the legalization of same-sex marriage. To me, what those things represent is basically the culture making a decision about queer people, that it is better to include us than to ostracize us. And I have all kinds of other feelings about that. I think part of the problem with that is that it blunts our
radicalism. During the rulings about same-sex marriage, my partner and I were willing to represent ourselves publically as a face of a lesbian family, but we wouldn’t have availed ourselves of the marriage part. We don’t really believe in it. It feels ridiculously assimilationist. That’s another issue!

Things have hugely changed. I taught the first course at this university that had the L-word in the title; it was called The Lesbian Experience. I taught it in 1991 and it was considered so outrageous at the time that it made the newspaper. This was a pretty conservative city at the time – it is less so now – but when I think about what that meant, that I taught a course called The Lesbian Experience and it made the newspaper . . . What did they think would happen? What did they think people did in a course?

So, I think the cultural changes have been huge. There is an expectation now that there was not 30 years ago. First of all, that people can talk about their affectional identity or sexual orientation with the expectation that the culture won’t faint, that everyone will basically be ok. That’s a really big change. And I think the kind of cultural decision to try to assimilate lesbian and gay people (I think society is still struggling with trans* issues) is really demonstrative of that change. If you think about it, what could be more cultural than marriage and the military in our country? Those are huge pieces of our culture. So, if you do those things, you have bought into basic parts of the culture. The marriage issue implies that children in same-sex marriages are now seen as having two parents – that’s a big thing. It represents something good, and also something limiting. These are complex issues.

For about 15 to 20 years, I was the _de facto_ chair for what we called the LGBT faculty staff taskforce. We worked with the union to craft language for the domestic partner provisions. It took three or four contract attempts to get them in there because the negotiators would use the
domestic partner benefits as a bargaining chip. They would be in the proposed contract and the administration would say “Oh, this will be so terribly expensive. We will have all these men with AIDS!” So, they would drop it in order to get something else. That happened repeatedly until the late 90s.

Working on the taskforce, there were some really funny moments. The taskforce had gotten some people together and marched around the street carrying signs. There were probably only 6 of us, but we were making some noise and students stopped and joined us. And, there was a woman who was on the administrative team negotiating partner benefits. We had known each other since I first came here; we were casual friends. She called me on the phone about what we were planning to do and said something like, “Would the taskforce be comfortable with such and such language? Would you approve thus and so?” And I said to her, “I will have to ask my constituency.”

I let her believe that we had thousands of people in the LGBT taskforce, some huge organization made up of faculty and staff with pitchforks. She said “Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. Of course!” In actual fact, at no time did we ever have more than about 10 people. There were many more than 10 queer faculty and staff members, but we never had more than 10 active members of the taskforce. But, I got in touch with the 10 members and then I was able to answer her. It was pretty funny.

Research

My academic specialty changed as my career went on. While I teach courses that deal with, more or less, contemporary queer events and I am coauthor of an introduction to queer studies textbook, much of my research interest is earlier in time. So, there are aspects of what I do that are identity-based and being a lesbian has definitely influenced what I study, how I study
it, and what I teach. Even in my dissertation, while I was still married to my ex-husband, there was considerable lesbian material. It has always been part of my academic interest as well as part of my life.

I come from a very queer friendly department. I came into that at this university. I didn’t feel a lot of fear that my tenure decision would be based on whether anyone knew I was queer or not. Although, I did a big project – and this is really ancient history considering it was done in the 80’s – on technology; it has nothing to do with being lesbian or parenting. In retrospect, I think that was a safe project. It was a good project to take on to get me tenure. There was nothing identity-based about it. I remember thinking, at the time, that it was the kind of project that the department wanted to see. So I took it on, even though it was outside my primary interests.

**Motherhood**

In the late 1970s, when I had little children while I was in graduate school and as a young faculty member, like any other young parent, I was limited in my social life. I couldn’t go hang out at the bar after classes. My graduate student colleagues developed close friendships with the faculty by going out for drinks or doing something together after the day was over. I could never do those things.

So, parenthood affected my experience of work because it made me need to prioritize my children. You just have to. It wasn’t like you could say, “Oh, I guess I will.” No! When the school called to inform you that your daughter had head lice, there is no choice. The point is that when your kids needed something, it had to be done. Everything – job included – had to take second seat. The fact that I was a parent affected everything about my life. That is just how it was.
So much of parenting felt like “Oh my god, this is what I have to do today.” We called one of my kids “By-The-Way-Beatrice.” It makes my blood pressure go up just to think about. But, By-The-Way-Beatrice would say after dinner, “Oh, by the way, I have this project and it is due tomorrow.” That isn’t just a phenomenon of my kids, and it certainly had nothing to do with my being lesbian, but my life seemed driven by these moments where one of them would say “We need to do this right now!” “We have to go to the drugstore and get poster board right now!” “Ohhh, this project that I’ve known about for a month and a half is due tomorrow.” Or “Do you realize we have a band concert tonight?” “Did I give you the schedule for the soccer games? Because I have one today.” That was always happening. There was always that sense: the hilarious last minute stuff.

It seemed to me like the rhythm of family life and the rhythm of faculty life always existed in an uneasy alliance. That is how I experienced the connection between life as a parent and life as a faculty member. The lesbian part barely came in. It did come in, but always in individual moments.

At one point, my son had a friend over for the night and the boys had gone out. They came back late, after my partner had already gone to bed. The next morning, my partner and I were in the kitchen when the boys came downstairs and my son’s friend said to her, “What are you doing here?” And she said, “I live here.” He was dumbstruck. There turned out to be no problem with it, but my son felt bad because he hadn’t really prepared his friend. There was that sort of shocking moment when he realized that he would have to make sure that his friends understood what his family looked like, so there wouldn’t be any sort of shock.

There was a time that my daughter and her friends were out and saw a lady who was sitting on a bench who apparently had some facial hair. My daughter’s friend said “Oh look at
that woman with the hair on her face. That means she’s a lesbian.” And my daughter didn’t know how to answer that. She was about eight or nine and she finally said something like “Oh, that’s just dumb. That doesn’t make you a lesbian.” But she didn’t say anything else. She didn’t say, “You know my mother, she doesn’t have a beard.” She didn’t out herself and then she felt bad. When she told me about the situation, she thought she should have outted herself. There were always those events.

**Identities in Academia**

One of the benefits about being a faculty member is that you have a certain amount of flexibility, more than most careers do. But, that doesn’t mean that you can do anything at any time. You’re expected to be writing and publishing or else you’re going to perish. My life as a parent was profoundly influenced by the nature of my job as a faculty member. Certain things that I did as a faculty member required large blocks of time to write or to grade papers. Those things required organizing my home and family life in certain ways. On the flip side of that, having children required organizing my faculty life.

When my kids were very young, it was hard for me to teach before 9 o’clock because my kids had to get to school. I had to make sure they were where they needed to be before I came to the university. That is just one of 10,000 examples how having them influenced what I could do.

I don’t think I was treated differently than my colleagues who weren’t parents. And I think that is where being butch plays in. I think there are a couple of faculty mothers who use their motherhood to get certain things, to manipulate the system. There was one woman who was using her children as an excuse to get out of work, when it turned out she really had a drinking problem. But, in my case, I don’t think anyone paid attention to it. I do know some
younger faculty members who have young babies who are struggling because their clock is
ticking. But my clock wasn’t ticking; I had it all done by the time I was 30.

I think I have only socially been treated differently than colleagues who aren’t queer. Maybe we wouldn’t get invited to some events. But, the people who wouldn’t invite us are people with whom we wouldn’t have wanted to socialize anyway. But, that hasn’t been too much of an issue for us. I think the university is an oasis, even now, when things are better in the culture than they used to be. There are parts of the country where that would be different. But, it isn’t a huge issue for us here.

**Tenure and Promotion**

Being a lesbian mother did not impact my tenure and promotion processes. I don’t think anyone paid any attention to that. At my university, in the 1970s, there had been a big strike and eventually they established a faculty union. One of the benefits was the creation of standards and requirements for tenure and promotion at all levels appropriate to all departments in all colleges. So, there wasn’t the old-boy network anymore by the 80s and 90s when I became an assistant professor. We had our set of promotion and tenure guidelines. So, when I submitted my dossier for tenure, it was judged on the basis of absolute guidelines; there was no messing around with that.

**Benefits and Family-Friendly Policies**

I used tuition remission when my son went to college. Many years later now, my partner is on my insurance because we have partner benefits. In terms of the family provisions, we’re really only used those two. Those are big things.

My partner and I both worked on the LGBT faculty staff taskforce that accomplished getting domestic partner provisions for health insurance. We never envisioned we would need
those benefits. We didn’t know she would have to retire because of illness. So, we worked on that for all those years and we were so pleased when it happened, but we didn’t really think about it for ourselves. We were disinterested participants. For years we each had our perfectly good insurance and we didn’t think about it. Then, all of a sudden she needed it. I don’t know what we would have done.

Messages

In the early days, the 80s and the 90s, one of the strongest messages that I got at the university was that people didn’t know what was going on. What did it mean to be a lesbian parent? Could you even do that? There was a kind of curiosity. At least on campus it was always benign curiosity. People just wanted to know “What are your lives like? What do you do?” There was that puzzled curiosity.

In the early 90s, the local news did a television special on gays and lesbians at work. I agreed to be on it and the news person was going to come to one of my classes that week. I asked him to come about 10 minutes after the class started so that I could actually come out to the class officially. So I told them and it was hilarious. I just said “The news is filming lesbian and gay people at work and since I’m a lesbian and this is my work, they’re coming to film us.” There was silence for a minute. And then one boy pulled off his baseball cap, ran his hands through his hair, and said, “How do I look?” And I thought, “ok, I guess we’re alright.” So, the news person came and filmed and it showed on T.V.; it was a non-event really.

But then when I volunteered as an escort at Planned Parenthood that weekend, as I did weekly, there were two protestors standing behind me whispering loudly to make sure that I could hear them. They said, “Do you know she’s a lesbian?” “I know, I saw it on TV!” “Well, what do you think she gets out of this?” And then the other said, “I know, [lesbians] use baby
“blood in their rituals!” That just cracked me up and I burst out laughing. That was one sort of event, a kind of anti-gay occurrence that had something to do with my connection to the university. Things like that happened. People always assumed that I didn’t have a child once I was outted as a lesbian. There were always these little connections that didn’t feel like benign curiosity.

There were all kinds of messages. From the university itself, I felt nothing but support. From outside, other parents who were straight basically didn’t pay any attention. From my mother . . .

My mother knew I was gay before I got married. So, there was a huge family sigh of relief when I finally got married. They were all quite pleased; they had dodged a bullet. But, the bullet came back. When I told my mother that I was going to be living with a woman, living as a lesbian, she said “Well, you had a husband, you have beautiful children, you had a career . . . and now you want it all!” She was a person who was raised in the Depression and was very conservative. She knew what women were supposed to do and she never got to do any of the things I had. When she said that to me, I thought, does this mean she would have liked to have been a lesbian too? Would she have made that choice if it was available to her? It was really interesting. And it made it very clear to me that she had not been able to have the choices I had, whatever they were. She resented me for having the freedom she didn’t. It was quite interesting.

But, she came around. She died recently, at the age of 97. She had been afraid to come out as the parent of a gay child. Finally, she said something to her bridge club about her daughter and her daughter’s partner and about three out of the eight women said “Oh, well, you know, I have a son or a daughter who is gay!” She was finally able to say the word “lesbian” before she died. But her message at first was that I should be like everyone else.
My mother lectured me because she thought that children from divorced families turned rotten. If you knew my children, I think you would say they turned out ok. There is nary an axe murderer in the family. To the end of her days though, my mother persuaded herself that my children were damaged by my divorce. Finally, at the end, I don’t think she believed my being a lesbian damaged them, but the divorce had.

When I came out as a lesbian, I only lost one or two friends. They just disappeared from my life. I sort of thought they might come back into my life at some point, but they never did. Aside from them, there certainly wasn’t a huge exodus of people that I knew who were leaving my life or who were talking about how bad it was that I was raising my children in a lesbian home. Nobody ever said that.

Support

There have been so many people I felt support from. There was one group of gay and lesbian faculty that I knew. That was a nice group to have because there were other people who were experiencing what I was. But, there have always been straight faculty and administrators who have gone out of their way to make me personally understand that they value me. That was a long time ago, 20 years ago – people cared and it made a difference. Now it would make less difference because nobody seems to care that I’m a lesbian. There were people – faculty and administrators – who were supportive; they were good friends and they didn’t hide that. So, that has been a good thing.

Recently I gave the keynote speech at the Rainbow Graduation here on campus. When that event started there were about 30-40 people and now there are hundreds of people. It was a huge event. The university president and provost were there. You can’t even imagine what it looked like. I was introduced by someone who said, “For 30 years, ProfMean has been a queer
icon on campus.” And what she meant by that was that I have been out as a lesbian. Being out meant that students and faculty have felt they could come and find me. And they have. It used to drive my partner crazy, but when people wanted to talk to a lesbian, they’d call me. I think it is just that I was out at a time when not many people were out here. So, people have looked to me for support, too.

**Sophie: Parenting and the “Visibility-Invisibility Phenomenon”**

In some ways, I think being a parent has shifted my relationship with my colleagues. So many people here are faculty parents that I think there is a way in which having that as a shared point of departure made it different. It made me feel more of a sense of commonality with my colleagues than I had previously. On the level of daily interactions, having this set of common experiences has changed the way I interact with my colleagues who are also parents, most of whom are not queer.

I’m out to my colleagues and I am generally out to my students. I don’t self-consciously announce that I am a lesbian, but I don’t ever hide it. There are moments though when people find out that I am a parent that they make a set of assumptions about what that means about who I am that creates a strange visibility-invisibility phenomenon. When I say I have a child, people assume they understand what that looks like. That is a little frustrating and really annoying. So, I think it works both ways. I feel like I’m part of this larger community of people who are parents, that I was not previously part of, and yet I feel like that also tends to hide other aspects of my identity.

There are fewer than 10 faculty members in my department and there are about 80 faculty members in my school. We are all in the same building, so I really feel more like I’m part of the larger faculty. My department has a joint Ph.D. program with another department, which is the
department that my wife is in. So, in the context of the shared Ph.D. program, we have a shared academic arena. That has been a good thing, because we share the same colleagues and students. I appreciate that the small academic communities I inhabit mean that most of my students and all of my colleagues understand that I am a lesbian parent. That is important to me.

There are only two other queer couples with children who work at the university. We know them, it is great that they’re here, but we aren’t really good friends with them. There is a senior faculty member who, with her partner, was really supportive when we were first thinking about having kids. So, there are a few other queer parents, but not in our inner social circle. Our state only recently changed its policies to be more LGBTQ welcoming. So, we have known a lot of queer people who have moved here and then move away because they have other opportunities in other more affirming states. Of all the different kinds of institutions of higher education that I have inhabited as a student or as a professor, this university feels most closeted. There are fewer queer faculty members here and that is challenging. It puts a certain pressure on us and feels isolating. So, on the one hand, I share the parenting experience with so many of my colleagues, and yet the specificities of what it means to be a lesbian parent are not shared.

It is interesting to be a faculty member in an institution where it seems as though we are surrounded by two academic faculty member straight couples, whose situation looks a lot like my wife and mine. There are also a lot of male faculty members who have stay-at-home wives, who have a completely different relationship to parenting and the division of labor. It is always sort of surprising that there are those models out there. It varies a lot in terms of thinking about whom one’s peers are in the parenting process on the academic landscape. I’d say there is an enormous divide that is partly about sexual orientation, but in fact maps more in some ways onto relationship styles.
In the experience of our relationship, my wife and I came in as two academics committed to doing whatever we could to ensure that we both had the careers that we wanted and then parenthood sort of fit into that. There were difficult moments around that, but because we had really established our relationship on a basis of trying to find an equal balance between our work lives and our relationship, that has impacted the way we think about parenting in a way that is different from what I have seen among our straight friends in terms of trying to be intentional about being equally vested in the responsibilities of parenting. We are also aware of the limitations and the ways in which the university makes it really challenging to balance these roles. But, I think there is a way in which our desire for having a relationship modeled on equity and on understanding the challenges of being a female-identified person in academia has made us aware of the challenges and also the social capital that one gets as a parent in certain situations.

My wife and I both tend to work a lot. We are both ambitious. We have both worked hard to get where we are and we both really care about our work. But, we went into parenting also wanting to make sure that weekends can provide as much family time as possible. We try our best to ensure that there is the space for each of us to go to lectures that are really important, or to go to conferences and present papers, or to do research, or to travel. We figure out ways to balance that. We have friends who have done an accounting of which parent was doing how much childcare. That seems absurd to us. It worked for them, I guess. But, I think that we have a constant weighing of the choices we are making. We talk together about what we should say no to, what we should say yes to. We try to be fair about having time with our daughter and doing other things. It is not without its tensions or challenges, but after having been together for
18 years, our previous shared experiences inflect the way we think about all of this. The things that we are doing now are really important.

We have thrived as a couple and now as a family, spending time in other places and having different kinds of experiences. There’s a way in which we’ve really leveraged that possibility, which does not exist in other realms of work, as something that is both about our academic work but is also about the possibilities that allows for us as a family. Leaving town and having a different life elsewhere, a new set of experiences and a new set of associations, on some level balances the level of isolation we feel here since we don’t have really close queer friends here. One of the ways we’ve dealt with that has been to go away. That has been really positive, and it is a possibility that is facilitated by being a faculty member and by what the tenure-track, tenured landscape allows.

The fact that the federal legislation has shifted makes me really happy that no one has to go through what we did to have a child. I want to emphasize the degree to which being a faculty member with this incredible flexible, well remunerated, intellectually challenging, and exciting job facilitates parenthood in all kinds of ways, as much as it makes it challenging in others. There are ways that I have become a better faculty member because I have my daughter in my life; that’s pretty cool. But, as time goes on, feeling like you don’t have colleagues who are like you takes a toll. On the one hand, we’ve worked so hard to get tenure – that is really great – but, it wouldn’t be easy for us to move elsewhere to facilitate being in a community where we weren’t so isolated. So, that’s kind of a drag.

**Teaching**

I think that my queer-studies research isn’t necessarily the direct content of my classes now, but I am definitely informed by that work, especially in the classes that I teach to
undergraduates. I teach large survey classes in which I want to ensure that students are encountering material that makes them deal with questions of homosociality. I also want them to be attentive about understanding the subject material through multiple lenses. That is an important enterprise. Most of my classes deal with those issues. They are often around questions of ethnicity and race. I see all of that as informative for helping students think about different ways of interpreting and experiencing the material. I think we have moved from a much more concerted focus on a set of ideas and materials that were directly related to my own experience and identity to a more general concern about ensuring that there are multiple voices being heard in my classroom.

Often, especially in the survey classes, I try to have some of the material directly relate to questions of sexuality that are key to iconic examples with which students are familiar. I get them on board, because they think they know where the discussion is going, and then suddenly I show them a completely different way of thinking about the things they thought they understood.

Additionally, as a mom, I have a different way of relating to my students. I see them as someone’s children. I see them as people along the same trajectory that I see my daughter on. But, I think there is a way in which increasing empathy for my students isn’t really what I need for my own sanity and to ensure they’re making their own decisions. It is hard to find that balance, even on the interpersonal level. I’m the director of graduate studies for our doctoral program, which I really enjoy because it is working directly for the students. I feel like the work I do in that is really meaningful. It probably taps into my mothering.

Research

As a graduate student, that experience was so much about my move from being part of a very lesbian-centric community prior to graduate school to suddenly being in graduate school in
a completely different environment. It was really, really challenging. I was trying to navigate the feeling of serious alienation by the academic landscape that I found myself in. So, it was really important to find my own voice. I was in grad school starting in 1993, during a particular moment where queer theory was very big. So, my research wasn’t just about a personal story; it was also about the broader academic landscape in which these were really important concerns that all kinds of people were thinking about.

There was a period in graduate school when I was sort of doing two different kinds of work. One was more focused on queer material, and the other was focused on the material that has now become my work. If I look over the longer trajectory of my academic work, there was definitely a moment where I had a crisis about how my work was going to align with my identity and how I would invest in that. Maybe it is a similar trajectory in that I worked on two projects that were both important to me, but that one of them seemed more likely to help me be successful in terms of getting a job. I continued to do pretty intensive work on the second project for many years, but now that has sort of fallen by the wayside.

It is interesting to see how my own personal research trajectory has also been part of a larger set of conversations. At some point in the last decade, that has shifted. I am still quite conscious about the decisions that I make about my research and the degree to which I sort of left one of my prior research agendas behind. I am still aware of that and maybe not totally resolved about what that means, but here we are.

All of the work that I did in the more queer-studies genre is all on my faculty page and it is an important part of who I am, even if it is not the focus of my current work. It is important to me that people see that work when they’re looking at programs. And I think that has made a difference. I know it was important for me when I was choosing a graduate school – I knew
there was one member of the faculty who was queer and I thought, “Ok, I can handle this if that is true.” So, having that body of work on my faculty page, even though I’m no longer active in that line of research, is like a little sign-post for anyone who is looking.

My wife and I used to be way more driven around production of work. That was largely to build up to tenure. So, after our daughter was born, it was hard to figure out how to navigate the changing demands that we faced. So, I move a little bit more slowly in my own research and publication. That is partly about my desire to spend more time with my daughter and partly about being in a different moment in my career, when I want to try to do the work that I want to do rather than just being insane and pushing myself forward as fast as possible.

We were on leave last year, which was divine and heavenly. It was a lovely way to be a lesbian mom academic. We were able to do our own work and spend time with our daughter; it was awesome. Returning from that has been rough.

Motherhood

My wife and I knew that we couldn’t even entertain the possibility of being parents if we were living apart (in separate states as we were previously at different institutions on opposite sides of the country from one another). So, we put that conversation on hold until we were no longer living apart. That had a huge impact on the timing of becoming parents. Once we were here, we began thinking seriously about how to make becoming parents happen, as we were both in the midst of the tenure-track. Then the timing centered around the external mechanics of the process of getting pregnant. I definitely didn’t want to bear a child and my wife really did, so we had immediate consensus.

All this has shifted now, but five years ago, we had to have our daughter in a different state, where we got married a week before she was born so I could have the legal status to adopt
her. We already had a civil union, and previous to that, we had exchanged vows, so the wedding was a tertiary thing. It was about obtaining legal status. We had to establish residency in the other state, which was facilitated by the fact that my wife received a fellowship and we were able to live there for a year. So, being an academic actually make it easier for me to become a lesbian mom because we had the financial resources and the ability to move ourselves out of state.

That period was rough. We had left teaching jobs at different universities in different states from one another so that we could come here to have jobs at the same university, which was amazing. Now we both have tenure, so that has been amazing as well. But, to have left these institutions in different states where all of this would have been a non-issue and it took so much time and energy to make all of it happen – that was exhausting. And it certainly bore zero resemblance to the experiences of all of the people around us. This was the formative experience of what it means for me to be a lesbian mom. The degree to which our experience was so different from most of the people around us was really infuriating and alienating.

I’m nurturing and attentive to my students. I think being a mother has definitely made me have a different kind of ability to empathize and understand their experiences from a different perspective. Having that sort of vantage point is also like understanding the kind of levels of parental involvement, even of college-aged children, which I previously found totally annoying. Now, I have a bit more understanding than before I had children, when I really only sort of intellectually understood. Being a parent has made me more sensitive to the lack of institutional policies that support parents across the board. This has been a big issue at this university over the last several years. They’ve retrenched really, back from what had previously been pretty generous parental policies to totally rethinking things and making it all based on individual negotiation rather than a clear set of policies. Being a parent has definitely made me
much more aware of and sensitive to and enraged by the degree to which our university just has not dealt with this issue. The university largely operates around a model of the male academic who has a wife at home who does all the work. That is just not reasonable. In the grand scheme of things, my university – aside from the issues for LGBTQ people, which is better now because it is all coming down from the state – is probably pretty good in terms of support for parents, but it is still not enough and it is often not in the right ways.

In the first couple years of motherhood, all of the time that you spend with your child is about them in every second. As my daughter has gotten older and has more autonomy, my role as a parent has shifted. I can grade while she sits and draws or writes. So, there is a different kind of integration of my work and home life. They can have these moments of co-existing, rather than having to be completely separate. I remember when our daughter was born, my wife was putting the final touches on her book manuscript, so we were taking advantage of the fact that we were up all the time. We passed the baby back and forth while I looked at her footnotes and she finished proofreading. There was a way in which, from the beginning, having a child was integrated into our work lives that was really kind of unusual. I don’t hear stories from people who are finishing book manuscripts the month after their child was born. So, I think there was a way in which we were equally invested in this. It meant that we could be literally working and taking care of the baby on this insane schedule. But, there was something about that that was really precious. On the one hand, becoming parents shifted the way we allocate our energy and use our time outside of work, but there is also a degree to which our daughter just gets integrated into our being faculty members. It isn’t a 9-5 job; it is a way of life. And our daughter has become part of that. I remember when she was two or three and she was playing
with her dolls – they were having a search committee. So, being a lesbian mom academic has created a distinctive childhood for her.

You just can’t fit everything in a day, so I’m constantly making decisions about whether I’m staying up to write or doing something crappy. I’m not very good at doing things poorly. So, the choice is either between putting things off, or finding a balance. That is one of the challenges of just not having enough time to do everything and constantly feeling the push-pull of all these responsibilities. As you advance further in your career, it becomes more and more about offering back to the institution, but this shift has ramifications not only on parenting, but also on your own research. It doesn’t get easier. But, the upshot for me is that I’m clearer, for myself, about my priorities. That doesn’t necessarily mean that I align my everyday choices with my priorities, but I am better at setting reasonable limits than I used to be. I’ve had to be more intentional about my priorities and what I care about and having that be reflected in how I divide my time. Having summers off is amazing. Having the ability to do my work from home if my daughter is sick is fabulous.

I talk with my students about my daughter. They are interested – particularly my graduate students – in what it means for me to be a lesbian mother. I think that is because there aren’t that many models. They’re interested in my experience because of that difference. So, as a lesbian mom academic, I’m educating all the time. I’m not intentionally entering into it, if that makes sense, but rather called upon to educate, in all of these ways, about what it means to be a lesbian parent. I am called upon to educate my daughter’s preschool teachers, to educate my colleagues about what my wife and I had to do for me to be able to legally adopt our daughter . . . So, the other part of being a lesbian mom has been trying to educate our colleagues about things they had no clue about. It was shocking how extremely well-educated, completely fair-
minded people had no clue what the legal landscape looked like. It was shocking, alienating, and embittering.

As a faculty parent, there is a default to small talk with colleagues about children. My wife and I laugh that if we had decided not to have kids, we would have had to find different jobs. The peer pressure to be parents here is off the scale. I can paint a fairly rosy picture about the ability my wife and I have to balance all of our responsibilities. But, there are moments that are really hard and there are all kinds of things to think about that you didn’t have to think about before. Being a faculty mom isn’t without serious challenges and moments where trying to honor my priorities doesn’t work. My wife and I are lucky enough to be able to organize our teaching schedules so that we aren’t teaching at the same time, so there is always someone on-tap to be home with our daughter if she gets sick. In some ways, that is the great part of being an academic – the flexibility built into your schedule. But, it is also really challenging, because then you’re doing things you aren’t really supposed to be doing. This weekend, I spent a lot of time grading papers while my daughter was drawing next to me. That isn’t exactly how I would have liked to spend the weekend, but there are moments when that is also kind of sweet. When I don’t go to lectures in the evening like I used to, I don’t really feel bad about it. Something has to be really important for me to not spend the evening with my daughter since she is in school all day.

Being a lesbian parent has been challenging because we don’t have family here; we don’t really have a childcare support network. So, that puts pressures on the choices that we make and even just the amount of time we could spend in our offices. But, there are things that aren’t being done or aren’t being done the same way they were before we became parents. So, time
and responsibilities shift. That isn’t necessarily unique to being a lesbian parent. I think it is a question of the model of a particular relationship and how responsibilities are divided.

**Identities in Academia**

The degree to which the identity of mother takes over in academia is interesting. My colleagues see me as that first. It’s funny. It creates a common ground, but it makes it much easier to ignore that that isn’t all I am or that I’m not a mother like other people are. There is a kind of normalization that gets enacted around this in a way that is completely unspoken and unacknowledged. There is an upside to that, but there is definitely a downside as well. I feel like it makes me more normative in their minds. I mean, my wife and I are pretty normative, but I’d like to hold out for not being identical to the people around me.

As a lesbian, I get to be the person who heads every diversity committee in my school. We used to have a relatively large number of African American faculty members, all of whom have since left. So, now I am the in-house diversity kid. The token. There are benefits to that – I’m on the university diversity council, which is really great. I enjoy getting out of my school and taking part in the larger conversations that I feel are really important to have. But, there are also moments like, “Really? I need to do that *and also* be the head of all of these other committees around this issue?”

I’m a pretty shy person. Public speaking is always a nightmare. I think part of becoming an academic and part of the longer-term history there has involved learning how to find my voice in multiple ways in my role as a lesbian faculty parent. I think part of this longer-term shift over time also involves feeling more ok with who I am, for myself, and about feeling more confident about my role as an academic and less apologetic or concerned about how other people might see me. That is partly about feeling pretty ok, on most days, about being one of the only lesbians in
this little landscape that I inhabit. Sometimes that is really a drag. It was so fantastic to have a
colleague who was also my best friend, which whom I shared all kinds of experiences. We had a
very similar background. That was amazing. But she moved away to work at a less
conservative, more LGBTQ affirming university. I miss having that relationship.

But, there’s an ability to be the lesbian parent academic that I am in a way that I feel less
concerned about who I am in this situation on multiple levels. Part of that is about having gotten
tenure, part of that is having been here for a long time, part of that is about being a parent. As a
parent, your priorities shift. Some of the things that I used to spend a ton of time being
concerned about in my interactions with colleagues just don’t matter as much anymore. So, I
think that is a positive in the way that my experience as a parent has allowed me to recalibrate
my academic and other identities. That is really a gift.

I feel more of a sense of autonomy even as I am asked to do more and more things for the
institution. Partly because I have tenure and partly because I am a parent, that has toned down a
lot of my anxieties and concerns about daily life.

When I first arrived here, my office was a lot more expressive in terms of my artwork. It
was definitely my way of subtly marking my space, partly because my first teaching job was at a
school in the west and coming to this school in the east was a big move. So, decorating my
office was one of the ways I could ensure that I was expressing who I am in a way that was
visible if you looked. Now, my office is mostly decorated with my daughter’s drawings and our
schedules. I think the longer that I have been here and the more that I feel I am a fully vested
member (as fully vested as one can be at this school), people know who I am. There is a kind of
inverse relationship between feeling the need to have those things for myself and an affirmation
of who I am. I think that it is probably true that now that I’m sort of institutionalized, a known
quantity amongst the faculty, which then trickles down to students as well, these external, visible markers became less necessary to me.

**Tenure and Promotion**

The longer-term career strategy that my wife and I really worked on together was about wanting to land in tenure-track jobs that would be proximate to one another. All of that was sort of part and parcel of figuring out how our relationship could be balanced with our work and would, for sure, be a part of thinking about having a child. Once we both landed here, it took an extra year for my wife to be on a tenure-track line, so that was another moment of uncertainty and transition. But, once that happened, we started planning how we would get tenure and how we would have a child. Those two things happened simultaneously, which was a lot to balance – emotionally and time-wise.

We ended up being really strategic. Well, part of it was also just dumb luck. My wife was able to get a fellowship that facilitated the whole process of having our daughter and my being able to adopt her in this other state. We have maximized leave time with full potential. When our daughter was three years old, we both went up for tenure. That was super challenging, but we also felt like if we pushed through it, it would pay off.

**Benefits and Family-Friendly Policies**

My daughter was born in April, just shortly before summer (when I’m already off work). Some of my colleagues were very helpful in covering the last three weeks of the class I was teaching around the time our daughter was born. After the summer, we moved immediately into my wife’s fellowship for the following year. During that year, I took the year of leave that I was eligible for because I was midway to tenure.
I could have asked for a semester of leave after I officially adopted our daughter. I almost did, just to follow the letter of the law and to make the institution grapple with the fact that we, as lesbian parents, were subject to completely different legal constraints that meant that I had to go through a very lengthy, complicated process of adoption. Ultimately I decided not to take another semester of leave (for the adoption) right after returning from my year of leave (entitled tenure-track leave) because it would have been obnoxious to my colleagues.

As a faculty member, I am aware of the fact that we have extraordinary parental rights and privileges compared to our staff colleagues who have nothing. Despite the frustrations, we are in a privileged position. What we have access to versus what staff members have access to is like night and day.

My wife and I have been able to take sabbaticals at the same time. We both do research in another country, so we have taken our daughter with us. There is a way in which being a faculty member gives us these amazing opportunities. We both applied for grants two years ago, in the hope that we could be on leave together last year. That worked out. It was a really good time to uproot our daughter and take her to another city for a year. It is interesting the way in which all of our decisions now, especially those about being faculty members and the long-term strategies we have for research, are also about challenges and opportunities for our family.

Messages

There have been moments when particularly with students who, if they first knew that I’m a mother and then they realize that I’m lesbian, are surprised or embarrassed. When I was offered this position, my hire was predicated on my wife being hired as well. And the timing of all of that was really interesting, because I arrived for my on-campus interview the day after the Defense of Marriage Act passed in this state, so, I feel like we arrived here and like all of our
colleagues were aware that we were a couple. All of our immediate colleagues and administrators knew about us from the get-go. I think that has meant that all of this groundwork was done, even before we arrived. People understood that we were lesbians.

However, there is the surprising ignorance about our situation. Some even forget that I am a lesbian mom, even though they all know my wife. I experience a total blindness and lack of visibility of queer identity at this university. The invisibility is profound. There is a complete failure to recognize the non-normative. And being a mom makes it even easier for people to think that I am just like everyone else. But, other than that, I haven’t been subject to negative treatment from individuals, except on an institutional and legal level.

Support

The people who surround me – my colleagues – understand, on a basic level, the challenges of balancing parenthood and being a faculty member. In the scheme of things, there are frustrations about being at this university, but one good thing is that because parenting is so pervasive and such a shared experience, there is more sensitivity on the part of my colleagues and direct administrators. I appreciate that.

My partner supports me. We have a very tight family unit. You know, one of the hard things that we've discovered about being academics is that our colleagues leave. I guess that's true wherever you are, but every one of our best friends here have taken jobs elsewhere. So, that makes that whole support piece really challenging because it feels like you sort of establish a group of friends and work hard to make that work on top of everything else and then they move. So that's been hard and neither one of us are very good at maintaining friendships long distance.

But we both are also very engaged with our families. My wife's parents and my parents are incredibly supportive as parents and as grandparents. They live in different states, but they
come visit a lot. They are very reliable if we both have to travel for something; they'll come and spend a week and take care of our daughter. I think even though there are moments of feeling like we have to just deal with all the childcare issues ourselves, we do have this larger support system - my brother and sister-in-law and my wife's sister are really great, too. So, I think that the consistency in the family support has helped to kind of weather the instability of our immediate circle of friendships.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present findings related to the research question that guided this study: What are the experiences of queer faculty mothers who simultaneously navigate motherhood and academia? Because of this context, findings relate primarily to the academy and participants’ experiences of motherhood and academia (i.e., I did not seek to understand how they have navigated queerness). First, I present findings related to work climate, including around sexual orientation, parenting roles, and tenure and promotion. Next, I present findings related to participants’ support systems. Third, I present findings on participants’ enhanced well-being. Lastly, I present findings aligned with the theoretical framework, work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Work Climate

Multiple subthemes arose regarding work climate. Subthemes include sexual orientation, parenting role, and tenure and promotion. All participants discussed the influence, though varied, of human resource (HR) policies and departmental procedures on their experiences. Participants described the way HR policies affected them regarding their sexual orientation and parenting roles. Multiple participants also told stories that described being treated differently from colleagues who were not queer, who were not women or mothers, or who were not queer faculty mothers. Therefore, in the following subsections, I address human resource (HR) policies and procedures and differential treatment.

Sexual Orientation

In this section, I address the variability in participants’ outness as queer as well as the variability in colleagues’ support of participants’ sexual orientation. I also discuss the ways participants have incorporated their sexual orientation professionally and the ways in which
some participants perceive their queer visibility. I then describe participants’ experiences with sexual orientation-related human resource policies and procedures. Lastly, I describe differential treatment.

**Variability in outness.** All participants were out about their sexual orientation at work; the length of and degree of outness varied by participant as well as situationally. For example, Josie’s colleagues, supervisor, and students were generally aware of her queer identity; however she made it a point not to speak about her sexual orientation or relationship with her dean. Josie explained,

> It isn’t that I don’t want her to know that I’m queer. I don’t think that is an issue. But, I don’t want her to think about the domestic part of me. I want her to only think about the professional part of me.

Several participants were out on the job market, while at least one participant only more recently came out in her professional life. Multiple participants incorporated their sexual orientation into their teaching topics or discussions; other participants did not hide their sexual orientation, but rarely discussed it in the classroom.

**Variability in support of sexual orientation.** Participants described varied degrees of support for their sexual orientation at work. Sophie described her university, “Of all the different kinds of institutions of higher education that I have inhabited as a student or as a professor, this university feels most closeted. There are fewer queer faculty members here and that is challenging.” Sophie repeatedly talked about what a “drag” it was that she felt isolated as a queer faculty member there. On the other hand, ProfMean joked, “[People at the university] used to call our department the granola department because they said we were full of fruits,
flakes, and nuts.” She perceived this as an acknowledgement of the supportive climate in her department.

Most participants described an environment somewhere between the feeling of total isolation and being full of other queer or queer-affirming people. About her sexual orientation at work, Josie stated,

There are times that being queer works to your benefit and sometimes it works as a detriment. It goes both ways, and sometimes it just depends on whom you’re working with and what their take is on you. I think what is different is that if I weren’t queer; people wouldn’t have a take on me. It wouldn’t be as up for grabs.

Josie felt that if she were straight, her colleagues would not have analyzed her sexual orientation and arrived at a “take” on her. Josie believed that her sexual orientation put her in the position of people making judgments about her; Elizabeth perceived that her colleagues might extend their judgments about her to generalize to all people who identify as gay. Elizabeth said, “So, being gay, I feel this pressure to represent all people who are gay. Because, if I goof up, “Oh, wellll, you know she’s one of those.” So, I’ve always tried to go beyond whatever the expectations are.” In both cases, Josie and Elizabeth felt the need to consider the way their sexual orientation would affect their colleagues’ perceptions.

**Sexual orientation incorporated professionally.** ProfMean’s lesbian identity was fully incorporated in her professional life, even in the early 1990s. She shared, “I taught the first course at this university that had the L-word in the title; it was called The Lesbian Experience. I taught it in 1991 and it was considered so outrageous at the time that it made the newspaper.” However outrageous the course was considered by the city residents, she benefitted from a comfortable departmental culture.
Similarly, Kate believed that her faculty life had been influenced by her lesbian identity. She said, “When I applied for this job, I had a lesbian focused manuscript in progress, I presented a sample syllabus for teaching an LGBTQ-focused course, and I used the words “lesbian” and “queer” in my job talk.” Josie also remarked about her experience being out in the job search: “I had queer in the title of my dissertation and my work was about LGBTQ+ youth, so I was pretty out there on the market. . . . I felt like they knew they were hiring someone who was queer.” Joy’s scholarship had also been influenced by her identity. She stated, “Being a lesbian has influenced my career and my writing. . . . My research on lesbians has been well-received, well-accepted.” Joy benefitted from a positive response to her queer scholarship.

**Visibility.** Queer visibility is based in how others “see” or perceive LGBTQ people. For participants in this study, queer visibility related to their perceptions of others’ level of awareness of their queerness and their own interactions with others in the work environment. Physical appearances relate to physical queer visibility and are a subset of this section.

Sophie struggled with a lack of queer visibility within her institution. In her case, her queer visibility was directly tied to her parenting identity. She talked about her colleagues’ contribution to that as the result of their not understanding her identity as a queer mother:

There is a surprising ignorance about our situation. Some [colleagues] even forget that I am a lesbian mom, even though they all know my wife. I experience a total blindness and lack of visibility of queer identity at this university. The invisibility is profound. There is a complete failure to recognize the non-normative. And being a mom makes it even easier for people to think that I am just like everyone else.

The queer erasure Sophie experienced professionally was a point of tension and struggle for her. However, she very intentionally chose to be visible to queer people who were searching for
graduate programs by including her queer-studies research on her faculty page, as “a little sign-post,” in an effort to increase what she believed would be their comfort in knowing that at least one of the faculty members in the department was queer.

Josie also struggled with how to be visible in her professional environment. She noted the transition from graduate school to her faculty appointment as influential in this. She explained,

When I did my dissertation work, I was a queer researcher among queer participants.
When I came to this job . . . it was the first time that I was a queer person among a lot of allies. . . . Learning to be a queer person with queer people is really different than learning to be a queer person among allies.

Josie managed to remain visible in her scholarship, which she remarked “is all about queer issues,” as well as in discussing queer topics relevant to classroom topics and teaching.

*Physical appearances.* One aspect of queer visibility is physical appearance. ProfMean remarked about the way her queer visibility, in part as the result of her appearance, affected her faculty life. She noted,

I would say that being lesbian, and particularly being on the butch side of lesbian, has had some effect on my career at the university. . . . Butchness, because it partakes of the stereotypically male, can be kind of an advantage in an atmosphere like a university because you can claim a certain kind of power with it. . . . I don’t think I was treated differently than my colleagues who weren’t parents. And I think that is where being butch plays in.
Because ProfMean’s butchness afforded her an increased queer visibility and also a more stereotypically masculine presence, she experienced a nuanced differential treatment from her colleagues.

Elizabeth’s experience was an example of a counter narrative to ProfMean’s experience. Some of the harassment and heterosexism (e.g., colleagues who use the terms “faggot” and “dyke” and “make horrible comments about people who identify as LGBTQ”) Elizabeth experienced, she attributed to her lack of queer visibility because of peoples’ stereotypes of what is means to look gay. She explained, “My hair was long and I wear makeup and I guess I don’t dress like the stereotypical-whatever-people-have-in-their-mind-of-what-it-means-to-look-gay, so I pass then for being straight.”

**Sexual orientation-related human resource policies and procedures.** For the most part, participants had neutral or positive HR experiences related to their sexual orientation. Joy stated, “As a lesbian, nothing was different for me here, policy-wise . . . . Sexuality didn’t play into [leave or tenure clock-stop] polic[ies].” No participants reported experiences of blatant HR discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

In some cases, the university’s HR policies relevant to sexual orientation directly linked with participants’ decisions to work there. Liz said, “The university has a really good reputation and welcoming policies in place, which is why it was at the top of our list in my job search.” Liz and her partner additionally used dual-career opportunities, which Liz noted was “a big benefit.” Like Liz, HR policy influenced Elizabeth’s decision. After Elizabeth interviewed for her current position, the dean of her college called to inform her “that the university had passed a non-discrimination policy that included sexual orientation and also approved domestic-partner benefits.” That information was key in her decision to accept the position. However, that was
certainly not the case for Sophie; she and her partner took jobs at their institution in spite of the LGBTQ climate there, because that facilitated their ability to live and work in the same place unlike their previous faculty positions at institutions in different states.

Nearly all participants mentioned instances where their families benefitted from domestic-partner benefits. Interestingly, ProfMean and her partner were part of “the LGBT faculty staff taskforce that accomplished getting domestic partner provisions for health insurance.” Despite the fact they never anticipated needing those benefits, they used them when ProfMean’s partner retired early due to illness and ProfMean said, “I don’t know what we would have done [without those benefits].” Josie also benefitted from same-sex partner benefits when she utilized them for her partner. However, she drew attention to some of the concerns she had with the policy:

[Domestic partnership benefits are] not like marriage benefits in that you get taxed for the extra money that it costs. So, [HR] consider[s] the amount of money that it costs to cover your partner to be part of your pay; therefore, it is taxed, which is different than someone who is married. Now, we could get married and we wouldn’t have that tax. But, we aren’t married.

Josie no longer had a need for same-sex partner benefits, but her concern with this policy remained. Joy also mentioned frustration with the way same-sex health care benefits were unfairly taxed. Joy said, “There are things that some other heterosexual faculty members wouldn’t have to worry about . . . . So, there are ways that I think I’m not reaping the reward . . . of really good benefits that can come along with being a faculty member.”

**Differential treatment according to sexual orientation.** Some, not all, participants experienced differential treatment as the result of their sexual orientation. Two participants were
unsure whether microaggressions they experienced were related to their identities or not. Other participants, including ProfMean, noted differential treatment that did not negatively impact them. ProfMean said, “I think I have only socially been treated differently than colleagues who aren’t queer. Maybe we wouldn’t get invited to some events. But, the people who wouldn’t invite us are people with whom we wouldn’t have wanted to socialize anyway.”

Conversely, at the institution where she held her first full-time faculty position, Elizabeth experienced sexual harassment that was directly related to her identity as a gay woman. Her faculty mentor took her out for lunch and made several advances on Elizabeth, who expressed that she was not interested. She said,

He kept asking, “Well, then. Who is he? Who is he?” Finally, after being asked so many times, I said, “Her name is . . .” He was so upset with what I said that he got up from the table. When he came back from the restroom, he told me that if I told anyone about my relationship with my daughter’s other mother, he would make sure that I lost my job and that it would go something like this: “Elizabeth is not a team player. She doesn’t know how to play nicely with others.” And even though I told him that sexual orientation was protected in the personnel clause . . . he said he didn’t care.

Like Elizabeth, Kate also experienced departmental hostility and aggression in her tenure and promotion process, which she attributed to her sexual orientation. She said,

Do I have any evidence that it had anything to do with me being a lesbian? Absolutely not! Am I confident that it had everything to do with my being a lesbian? I am absolutely confident that it had to do with demographics! In their minds, lesbians are well and good if they just stay where they belong and lay subordinate. And that is not how it went.
Kate and Elizabeth clearly perceived their experiences to be differential treatment on the basis of their sexual orientation.

As described in the human resources policies and departmental procedures subsection, multiple participants noted their same-sex partner benefits were taxed differently than benefits for opposite-sex partners who were married. This is another form of sexual orientation-related differential treatment that participants experienced.

Not all sexual orientation-related differential treatment was perceived quite so negatively. For instance, Josie experienced being viewed as a token minority because of her identity as a queer woman and wound up as the “diversity” on campus committees and was asked to advise students who also identified as queer; she said, “Those things are a real privilege in many, many ways, but they are also a time-suck. I don’t know if it is a positive. If so, it is a positive and a negative.” She later stated, “In some ways, I have been treated differently than my peers who aren’t queer, but it isn’t always bad. Sometimes it involves being invited to bring experience and expertise to the table. Sometimes it is ugly, mostly it isn’t.” Similarly, Sophie said, “As a lesbian, I get to be the person who heads every diversity committee in my school... I am the in-house diversity kid. The token.” This default diversity representation seemed to be somewhat of a double-edged sword for participants; though they at times enjoyed representing minoritized groups in their university service, it was not all positive.

Parenting Role

All participants were open about their mothering role within their work environment, although to differing degrees. Some participants reported speaking openly and frequently about their children during class; other participants reported speaking about being a mother only when
asked. Josie shared, “There is an unspoken rule . . . Talking about parenting suggests that we aren’t really fully committed to our jobs.”

Not all participants felt they should not be open about their parenting role. For example, Liz said, “I find that it is easier for me to be open about being a parent than it is to be open about being a lesbian.” Liz was one of a few participants who felt this way (see Sexual orientation).

Participants had different motivations for talking about their children including pride, the applicability of being a parent to the academic or course topic, and the desire to be a possibility model for students (e.g., academics can have families, queer women can have families, queer moms can be academics).

**Family-affirming work environments.** About half of participants shared examples of family-affirming work environments, though not all participants experienced the affirmation consistently. Almost all participants had a baby shower thrown by their colleagues. Some participants, like Kate, talked about small groups of people as supportive of their family role. For example, Kate said, “My graduate students know my family. . . . My identity is a non-issue with [them].” Multiple participants mentioned bringing their family to departmental events.

Joy’s work environment was very supportive of her role as a mother and she consistently shared examples of family-affirmation. Joy said,

I’m really fortunate – my family is very much a part of our program, our department, they come to the faculty socials, the opening picnics, whatnot. There they are, the students are pushing them on the swings. When I come to my job, I’m bringing me – I’m not one person at home and then this different person at work.

Furthermore, Joy benefitted from having a department chair who was committed to helping faculty members be successful in their careers without sacrificing their families. Participants
reported benefitting from these positive, family-affirming work environments, which likely relates to their feelings of commonality vs. isolation.

**Commonality vs. isolation.** For some participants, the benefit of feeling commonality with other faculty parents was apparent as they shared their experiences. Sophie had given great consideration to this phenomenon. She recalled that she and her wife, who is also a faculty member, joked, “If we had decided not to have kids, we would have had to find different jobs. The peer pressure to be parents here is off the scale.” She eloquently described the benefit she gained from that commonality,

In some ways, I think being a parent has shifted my relationship with my colleagues. So many people here are faculty parents that I think there is a way in which having that as a shared point of departure made it different. It made me feel more of a sense of commonality with my colleagues than I had previously. On the level of daily interactions, having this set of common experiences has changed the way I interact with my colleagues who are also parents, most of whom are not queer. . . . The people who surround me – my colleagues – understand, on a basic level, the challenges of balancing parenthood and being a faculty member. In the scheme of things, there are frustrations about being at this university, but one good thing is that because parenting is so pervasive and such a shared experience, there is more sensitivity on the part of my colleagues and direct administrators. I appreciate that.

Liz’s experience in STEM was similar. She said, “Being a mom has been helpful for building a relationship with some of my peers. It has given me networking opportunities. . . . It isn’t controversial for me to be a parent, because everybody has kids.”
Kate, too, enjoyed having a community of people on campus who were also parents and she described an interesting nuance to this feeling of commonality. She said,

There are other queer parents on campus. We have some camaraderie with them. I’m White and our children are Black, so, visually, even if no other way, we have allies in people who are doing anti-racist work on campus. Those people might be more visible and active allies of mine as a queer parent because of the multiple-race nature of our family than they might be if I were not a parent. We might have more solidarity around anti-racist work than anti-homophobic work. Although the overlap between people who do anti-racist and anti-homophobic work is very substantial on campus. So, as a result, I have this subset of people who are allies.

At times, participants shared experiences that seem to fall somewhere in between commonality and isolation. Sophie expressed her frustration that although parenthood gave her common ground with her peers, it also seemed to erase important facets of her identity and experiences. She said,

The degree to which the identity of mother takes over in academia is interesting. . . . It creates a common ground, but it makes it much easier to ignore that that isn’t all I am or that I’m not a mother like other people are.

ProfMean talked about her experience, “Being a lesbian parent, I have always felt in some ways more connected to straight parents than to lesbian non-parents . . . . The huge thing we had in common was our children.” So, while she enjoyed the connection with other parents, she acknowledged feeling isolated from other lesbians who were not parents.

Participants also shared experiences of clear-cut isolation they experienced because they were the only, or one of few, people “like them.” Elizabeth experienced isolation as a parent of
school-aged children, “At least in my department, parents of school-aged children are a marginalized group. There aren’t a lot of us.” ProfMean and Sophie experienced isolation for different reasons. ProfMean had little contact with other faculty parents, which she credited to chronology. She said, “When I came here . . . I was 35, but my kids were already five- and ten-years old. The other people I came to know who were gay and had children tended to have younger children. They weren’t like me.” Sophie expressed her discontent at the lack of lesbian-parent peers; she elaborated, “The specificities of what it means to be a lesbian parent are not shared. . . . As time goes on, feeling like you don’t have colleagues who are like you takes a toll.”

Although Liz enjoyed the commonality of having peer faculty parents, she too felt isolated because of her identities. She said,

I work in a male-dominated, STEM field. It is controversial that I’m a woman, so to be a lesbian is just one step further out there. I’ve found that to be difficult. Add on to that that I am a mother as well and people are like, “I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

So, I think that has been a challenge.

Clearly, the feelings of commonality and isolation were not mutually exclusive for participants in this study. Several participants reported benefiting from having shared experiences with other faculty parents, while also feeling frustrated and isolated as a queer parent. Community with other faculty parents was not synonymous with community with other mothers or other queer mothers. Additionally, participants’ feelings of commonality versus isolation reflect their degree of fit with their institutions and departments.

**Parenting-related human resource policies and procedures.** Human resource policies participants related to motherhood include parental leave policies and tenure clock-stop policies.
While tenure clock-stop policies are not solely family related, participants in this study only discussed them as such.

**Parental leave policies.** Unsurprisingly, parental leave policies were also important to most participants. At Josie’s institution, maternity leave was a new benefit and one that helped in her decision to have her first child; “The year I became pregnant with my first kid was the first year my university had maternity leave. So, that made it seem more possible.” However, Josie did not formally use the institution’s six-week maternity leave for her first child. She explained how her department modified her “leave” in an unofficial capacity:

My first kid was born in early September. So, that was the beginning of the semester. I wasn’t really on leave, they just didn’t have me teach that semester. I still worked the whole time, but I didn’t teach so I had more flexibility. And I think they kind of thought of it as my six weeks stretched across the semester. I came to work all the time, I just strapped her on and came to work. The idea that I could have had a sub teach my class for six weeks and then I’d have had to finish the semester would have been worse. The advantage would have been that I would have been totally off for those six weeks, as opposed to strapping her on and bringing her to dissertation defenses or whatever. But, I think the ignoring of the technicalities of the leave policy was a gift. The person who made that decision was making every effort to be generous.

Similarly, Liz did not take a formal maternity leave. Instead, she “took active service with modified duties for the following academic year.” The modification included one course release. Three participants took some form of unofficial leave with their children. Two participants did not need formal or informal leave (one participant had her children during her doctoral program
and one participant adopted her child while she was a part-time non-tenure-track adjunct and worked full-time elsewhere).

Two participants formally took family-related leaves. Joy formally took maternity leave. Her university also had a six-week paid maternity leave policy; however, she took sick time after the paid time so that she had 12 weeks off with pay. Like Josie’s department, Joy’s department chair was flexible in Joy’s duties for the remainder of the semester. Of her first maternity leave, Joy said, “I didn’t go right back into the classroom [after my leave]. . . . I was eased in. And then it was full-steam ahead the next semester.” Joy’s department chair exercised the same flexibility with her second leave as well.

Kate took parental leave for the adoption of her children. She noted, “The way the policy was put in place, there was a lot of room for individual interpretation on the part of department chairs.” Thankfully, one of Kate’s senior colleagues suggested she ask the outgoing chair of her department who was thought to be more likely to agree to her request than the incoming chair (which proved to be true). Kate appreciated the leave time; however, she said,

It did come back to haunt me in ways that are immeasurable. No one ever said to me, “I’m giving you grief around tenure because you took two maternity leaves”; but my belief is that it made a difference to at least one person who later made my tenure bid more difficult than it might otherwise have been. In their mind, I had the temerity to ask for two maternity leaves and still expect to attain tenure.

Kate’s experience, though notable, was distinctly different than other participants’.

**Tenure-clock stop policies.** Participants had varied experiences with tenure-clock stop policies. Only one participant, Joy, stopped her tenure clock. Two participants considered
stopping their tenure clock but chose not to for various reasons. The remainder of participants did not even consider stopping the tenure-clock.

Joy stopped her tenure clock in her fourth year at her university, the year before she would go up for tenure. She noted,

There was a point that I was stressing over whether to take the extra year or not and a senior faculty member told me, “This is going to be a blip in your life. In a few years from now, you’re not going to care if you stopped the clock or not.” And she was right. So, I extended the tenure clock out an additional year . . . because I did not want to sacrifice time with my family.

On the other hand, Liz did not stop the tenure clock due to others’ warnings that she should not. This later frustrated her. She explained, “When it came time for tenure, I had already decided I wasn’t going to stop the tenure clock and my department chair . . . said, ‘. . . you could have stopped the clock.’ And I thought, what!?! It was a little late for that.” Despite her frustration that she previously had been discouraged to stop the tenure clock, Liz was reappointed and granted tenure though she mentioned how much she “could have really benefitted from having that extra year.” However, Liz expressed resentment and stated,

I felt like I wasn’t entitled to stop the tenure clock because I wasn’t seen as a mom since I didn’t physically give birth to our son – even though we split our parenting duties 50/50. I think, because I am the second parent, that I am more like a dad in some way, even though as a parent in my household, I’m a mom. But, I’m not really seen as a mom [at work]. I’m treated more like a dad, and dads are supposed to be workaholics with a wife who stays home to take care of the kids. I’ve had colleagues say, “Oh, your wife is at
home with the kid, right?” with the expectation that I’m not the mom. That is frustrating; it has been difficult to deal with.

Therefore, although she did not end up needing the benefit of extra time to attain tenure and promotion, she explicitly felt as though she was not entitled to have done so because of her colleagues’ perception of her parenthood status. Even though Joy was the only participant who utilized a tenure clock-stop, the policies themselves, and the ways in which they were enacted (or in most cases, not enacted), were important to multiple participants.

**Differential treatment as a woman or mother.** Multiple participants reported doing more service, whether formally (e.g., serving on committees, advising students) or informally (e.g., students coming to them about non-course related topics). For example, while Liz noted that, apart from service, her department seemed to be very equitable, at the time of her interview, Liz was on five departmental committees (one of which she chaired) and a college-wide committee. Beyond the university, she was also an associate editor for a journal. She said, “[My job] feels like it is literally 50% research, 50% teaching, and 50% service. . . . A lot of that has to do with the fact that I am a woman and women tend to do more service.”

Elizabeth said,

In the context in which I serve the university, being a mom is different from being a father. The [heterosexual] men who are fathers travel to different countries, they go to conferences, they stay late at work because they have someone at home. . . . So, they go off and they do what they want to do. It is really interesting. I see women for whom it is very different, whether they’re gay or straight. They’re like, “No, I’m a mom and this is my responsibility.” It is fascinating to see that. Even if it is two women who are faculty members. It isn’t like one takes on a different role than the other. So, whatever is
decided upon in Western society of what it means to be a mother, it is definitely
engrained in the people that I work with and in me and how I’ve understood what it
means to be a mom.

For Elizabeth, this messaging was about the prioritization of roles and the academy’s value
thereof. Josie perceived the same messaging. She said, “In non-queer contexts, it seems to me
that the parents who have value are straight men who have wives who stay home. It’s totally
acceptable for them to talk about their kids, because their kids never interrupt their work life.”
Several participants encountered the academy’s preference for the “ideal worker” (Acker, 1990).

**Differential treatment for multiple identities.** In addition to the previously mentioned
difficulties with queer visibility, some participants perceived a loss of status because of their
identity as a queer mother. For three participants, this experience occurred even within queer
communities, interpreted as a sort of horizontal hostility. Josie experienced this and noted,

> After becoming a parent, something feels different, like I am less queer, like I have
bought into the heteronormative. . . . Particularly among queer-focused groups, I think
you lose a lot of status as an academic when you become a parent. . . . People expect less
of you in terms of your scholarship. You know how nuns and priests aren’t supposed to
get married because your first commitment is to God – it almost feels like when you have
kids, you are conveying that your first commitment is no longer to your scholarship or
your work. That you’ve proven you’re not worthy or something, particularly among
queer communities. Not only have you broken your vow of scholarship, but you’ve also
sold out to the heteronormative.
In spite of this difficulty and loss of status, Josie would not trade being a parent to regain status with the queer academic community. She explained, “I love being a parent . . . I’m totally at peace with the trade-off.”

Kate also experienced differential treatment, which she attributed to the combination of being queer and being a mother. She said,

There are some people in our queer professional community who are still somewhat hostile toward lesbians who choose to be parents, given the understandable fight there was for women to be able to choose not to be parents. . . . I feel that sort of disdain from some people on campus. Like, “what are you doing? You’re undermining the work of a whole generation of feminists by being a mother.” And I just have to pretend I don’t feel their disdain. So, I am their ally anyway. I’ve just learned to keep my mouth shut about my kids around them, which isn’t always intuitive, because my children are a big part of my life.

Loss of status was experienced by multiple participants, particularly as the result of their multiple identities as queer faculty mothers.

**Tenure and Promotion**

Because participation in this study was contingent on having received tenure, all participants had been successful through tenure and promotion processes. All but one participant had a positive, or at least neutral, experience with tenure and promotion. Kate’s experience provided a counter-narrative. She believed that her identity as a lesbian, combined with her audacity to take parental leave for the adoption of her children, directly led to her difficulty in the tenure and promotion process (though she was granted both after “the whole tenure debacle”). With this exception, Joy captured the sentiment of participants well when she stated, “Being a
lesbian hasn’t really affected my tenure and promotion. . . . The bigger impact for me was the timing of having kids and figuring out how all of that works. Being a mother, the [tenure] process took longer.”

**Parenting on the tenure clock.** Participants’ experiences of the tenure clock varied. Some participants experienced considerable support as pre-tenured faculty parents. Joy described that support: “I felt very supported in [the] tenure and promotion process, in realizing that I was doing it with a child . . . the support was how are we going to help you get tenure.” She explained that her colleagues helped “protect” her during that process, that achieving tenure was of primary importance.

Other participants experienced less (or no) support as parents on the tenure track. Liz noted, “The message is: ‘You can’t have a baby on the tenure clock.’” When Liz and her partner first considered becoming parents, which coincided with her first year as a faculty member at her institution, she told her partner, “I can’t carry a baby because I’m on the tenure-track. I can’t do that.” As a result, her partner carried their child. Later, they decided to try to have another child. Again, Liz felt that her faculty position should prevent her from carrying their child, and she said, “I’m coming up for tenure, I can’t carry a baby.” Liz went on to explain, “Being a faculty member affected those really important decisions . . . . There is so much stigma of having a child while you’re on the tenure-track. And I didn’t know how that would be perceived since I’m a lesbian.”

**Avoiding LGBTQ topics pre-tenure.** Although most participants felt that their sexual orientation did not affect their tenure and promotion experiences, it did seem to affect some of their own decisions leading up to that point. For example, several participants, either consciously at the time or retrospectively, avoided queer-focused research, fearing it would
impede their chances of attaining tenure. ProfMean said,

   In retrospect, I think [a big technology project] was a safe project. It was a good project to take on to get me tenure. There was nothing identity-based about it. I remember thinking, at the time, that it was the kind of project that the department wanted to see. So, I took it on, even though it was outside my primary interests.

ProfMean’s primary interests at the time included queer and gender studies, but ProfMean felt that investing time in this non-queer- or gender-related topic might prove that she could be taken seriously in other lines of research as well. Like ProfMean, several other participants had multiple and diverse research interests early in their career, but focused on the topics that may have been less controversial as the primary project in attaining tenure.

   Benefits of tenure and promotion. Unsurprisingly, participants noted benefits of tenure and promotion. All participants noted some form of increased confidence that coincided with attaining tenure. Liz said, “Once I made it through tenure, I felt like I had gotten the seal of approval. In effect, it is saying, ‘She’s ok, she’s doing really good work and has an international reputation.’”

   For Sophie, the combination of tenure, institutional longevity, and parenting resulted directly in her increased confidence. Sophie shared, “There’s an ability to be the lesbian parent academic that I am in a way that I feel less concerned about who I am in this situation on multiple levels.” Josie also noted an increase in confidence as the result of tenure and promotion. She stated,

   I definitely felt more job security after getting tenure, but I feel a lot more comfortable taking risks, whether they are on behalf of my family or anything else, after becoming full, even more so than I anticipated. It is not really about job security; it is about having
the confidence of knowing the institution, knowing the limits, knowing the dynamics. . . .

People know me – they know I’m carrying my weight. They know I do my job. I think it changes over the years in that way, as people come to know who I am and what I’m likely to contribute. . . . [After becoming full], I felt the sudden responsibility for owning my knowledge. I couldn’t be a full professor and say, “Well, I don’t know how we do this here.” It is my job to think back on my experiences here and think of how things have been in the past, what worked well, what worked poorly, and how we might move forward.

Multiple participants noted a temporary decrease in their publications following tenure; participants indicated this was a consequence of their desire to spend more time with their families than they had previously been able to (or felt comfortable to) spend. Josie noted this was because tenure “took the pressure off.” Joy’s quote elaborated on this: “I have more choice of whether I’m going to be published or not, because I don’t have the same worry about attaining tenure that I did pre-tenure.” Liz further described this, “Now that I have tenure, I feel less pressure to be meeting milestones within a certain time period. I’ve been able to relax a little bit.”

Several participants noted that tenure allowed them to increase their commitment to social justice issues. Liz said, “Now that I’m tenured, I have the luxury of being able to do some of the things that are important to me, but not related to my field. . . . I’m hoping to . . . improve the climate for students who have disabilities.” Elizabeth felt that her tenure and promotion afforded her the academic freedom to utilize her power and privilege “in a way to make sure that people who have been deemed invisible are visible and people who have been silenced are not silenced. I do that in my publication.” Kate felt similarly; she stated, “I decided that if, after
tenure, I don’t have the courage to risk writing what I want [a genre that matches this particular moment in queer politics], that is totally wimpy.” Kate later said, “All I risk is not getting promoted to full professor and a salary bump. That is a pretty low risk in comparison to some of the other risks I have taken in my life.” For Kate, and three other participants, a benefit of tenure and promotion was the freedom to pursue academic topics and research that may not typically have aligned with a chair or department’s philosophy of valuable research.

Sources of Support

Participants identified a variety of sources of support. Support was particularly meaningful for participants in the face of the differential treatment they experienced. All participants shared their feeling of being supported by colleagues and partners. Some participants also experienced support from their students.

Support from Colleagues

Joy and ProfMean felt highly supported by their colleagues and the university more broadly, particularly in the lens of inclusion. Joy spoke multiple times about the support she perceived from her colleagues and she credited that to the departmental culture and values: “The values of our department are social justice and inclusivity and I’ve seen them played out.” Regarding her identity as a gay mother, ProfMean said, “From the university itself, I felt nothing but support.” In addition to her connection to several other gay and lesbian faculty members, ProfMean stated, “There have always been straight faculty and administrators who have gone out of their way to make me personally understand that they value me.”

Joy reported a change in support over time. She said,
Pre-tenure, the support was helping me get tenure. Now, I feel like the support is, “Now that you’ve got so many different things, how are we going to help you manage your job without sacrificing your family?” So, it's two different kinds of support.

At multiple points during her interview, Joy noted how much she appreciated that her department chair was so supportive of faculty members’ lives outside of the university, as well as their careers. Joy said, “My department chair is really trying to create the culture in our department that we can do both family and career.” That messaging appeared to have been hugely influential on Joy’s perception of support and success.

Not all participants had such an overwhelmingly positive sense of university-wide support, but all participants reported feeling supported by at least some of their colleagues. Participants defined that support differently. For Liz, support was about relationship building and feeling she could be herself. Liz shared that initially she was cautious and hesitant about feeling comfortable with her colleagues, but “They turned out to be more supportive than I initially thought. . . I think building relationships with people over time has made me feel more comfortable and feel more supported.”

Elizabeth and Kate reported feeling support when colleagues stood in solidarity with them. Elizabeth felt supported when some of her colleagues attended an event where Elizabeth anticipated being confronted by a student who had made threatening and hateful remarks to her. Kate felt supported by colleagues when they defended her regarding tenure. Kate shared, “The majority of people there supported me and went out of their way to make sure that this act of [the chair’s] hostility didn’t go all the way to my not attaining tenure. The department as a whole supported me.” Kate’s colleagues showed that support in multiple ways, from generally
emotionally supporting her to speaking to more senior colleagues about her good work during
the tenure and promotion process.

Despite Sophie’s frustrations about the university in general, she felt supported by her
colleagues, largely due to their shared parenting experiences. Sophie stated, “Because parenting
is so pervasive and such a shared experience, there is more sensitivity on the part of my
colleagues and direct administrators.” Additionally, Sophie reported that when she and her
partner were first considering becoming parents, one of her senior colleagues was supportive and
a good source of information as a parent who was also queer.

Three participants found support from colleagues in the form of writing or research
groups. Kate said, “My writing group . . . offer[s] feedback and they don’t hesitate to make my
scholarship better.” Josie had been doing research with a group of colleagues for 11 years and
stated of it, “Learning to work across differences is something I really value and I think it is
really important, so I’m invested in that work.”

Support from Partner

All participants appreciated feeling supported by their partner, although they perceived
that support in different ways. Participants appreciated the way their partner supported them in
accomplishing their work, parented with them, and demonstrated patience for their multiple role
requirements.

Some participants noted their appreciation for their partner’s support of their work.
Elizabeth noted, “[My wife] supports me in every way possible to engage in [my] work
authentically. She goes to all the workshops we offer, she goes to events with me. She reads my
writing.” Joy’s partner supported her work by taking their children to do things on weekends or
in the evenings sometimes so that Joy could make progress on her work. Kate’s partner did the
same. Kate shared, “[My partner] is always willing to step in to enable me to do my job, to see my writing group, to do the extra things when they fit in. She makes it possible by picking up the slack.”

Some participants talked about their partner’s parenting and the way they work together as a form of support. Josie talked about how she and her partner “tag-team” on parenting responsibilities. Sophie referred to her and her partner’s “tight family unit” and equitable relationship. Sophie shared,

In the experience of our relationship, my wife and I came in as two academics committed to doing whatever we could to ensure that we both had the careers that we wanted and then parenthood sort of fit into that. . . . [We try] to be intentional about being equally vested in the responsibilities of parenting.

Multiple times, Joy talked about how much she appreciated that she and her partner are both committed to teaching their children about social justice. For Joy, this was one way her partner supported their approach and commitment to parenting together.

Some participants appreciated their partner’s patience for their multiple roles. Joy said, “I have a very patient partner who puts up with me. I couldn’t do what I’m doing if I didn’t have someone who understands that I’ve got a lot of demands pulling on me.” Similarly, Liz said, “My family is very supportive. . . . They’re patient. . . They came with me through this whole journey; I wouldn’t have been able to make it without them.”

Support from Students

Several participants reported their appreciation for students’ patience. Liz said, “My students are supportive. . . . They understand when I can’t email them back because there’s a crisis.” Liz appreciated that, because her students knew her family, they were understanding
about family emergencies and obligations. Other participants talked about students’ patience with grading. For example, Joy stated, “My students know my kids, and there are times I say ‘I'm not going to get your papers graded because I want to be with my family.’” Joy appreciated her students’ understanding.

Josie was supported by a student during her interview at the university. She shared, When I interviewed here, a doctoral student pulled me aside and said, “Ok, nobody is going to tell you this, but I want you to know . . .” and she just mapped out the queer community for me. That really made a big difference in where I would go.

This student’s support was a major contributing factor in Josie’s decision to accept the job at the university, as well as in deciding in what part of town she and her partner should live.

In summary, although participants perceived varying degrees of support and from a variety of sources (colleagues, partners, students), there are several commonalities. First, participants perceived patience as a valuable form of support from partners, students, and colleagues (with colleagues, patience came in Joy’s chair and colleagues helping Joy manage her job without sacrificing her family, several participants’ interpretation of shared parenting experiences with their peers, and patience as extended to participants in writing and research groups). Additionally, participants experienced aspects of positive relationships (e.g., inclusion, connection, relationship building, solidarity, teamwork, information sharing) with colleagues, partners, and students that they identified as supportive. Participants benefitted significantly from shared experiences with others, including shared parenting experiences with their colleagues, shared commitment in their approach to parenting with their partner, and for Josie the shared experience of queerness with a student who was then able to inform her about the queer community on campus and in the surrounding area.
**Work and Family Roles and Participants’ Enhanced Well-Being**

As Voydanoff described role enhancement, “Performing multiple roles is associated with rewards and privileges that facilitate the management of multiple roles” (2001, p. 1619). Participants discussed four primary ways in which work and family roles enrich one another in additive ways that contributed to their enhanced well-being: in their ability to prioritize, attempts to balance roles, enjoyment, and commitment to social justice.

**Ability to Prioritize**

All participants noted the difficulties involved with prioritizing two roles they perceived as important: faculty member and parent. Josie noted, “Figuring out the priorities is hard when you love your work and you love your family and you want to do it all, all of the time.” ProfMean also described the pull between two priorities she held: “It seemed to me like the rhythm of family life and the rhythm of faculty life always existed in an uneasy alliance. That’s how I experienced the connection between life as a parent and life as a faculty member.”

However, in spite of whatever difficulties they may have felt about prioritizing their roles, most participants prioritized family when it came down to the need for a choice. Liz described how she prioritized family:

Very early on, I made a commitment to my wife that I would not bring work home with me. I have done pretty well with that. I do check my email when I’m at home, but I don’t typically pull out my laptop. I don’t work on notes for class or anything like that unless it is super early in the morning before anyone else is awake. I try not to let being a faculty member impact my home life too much.

Most participants shared experiences of prioritizing family, similar to the way Liz has done. However, like Josie, participants may not always have been able to make that choice. As Josie
said, “But, then there are times when I can’t prioritize my family the way I wish I would because my work means a lot to me. . . . If I think rationally and clearly about it, both of these things are important.” Participants’ ability to devote resources to and meet their priorities enhanced their well-being.

**Attempts to Balance Roles**

In addition to prioritizing roles, participants talked about their experiences attempting to balance their roles, when choice was not required. Kate described the difficulty therein:

Being a faculty member and being a mother are at odds with each other for the most part.

It is having two jobs. It is a lot. Being a queer faculty member requires 100% of your attention. So does being a mother. So, when you do both, you don’t do either one as well. Or maybe you do both of them better. I don’t know.

Multiple participants also referred to the feeling that being a faculty member and being a parent required all of their attention somehow simultaneously.

Sophie and her wife, who is also a faculty member, achieved a sense of balance by working together. Sophie explained, “We try our best to ensure that there is the space for each of us to go to lectures . . . or to go to conferences . . . or to do research, or to travel. We figure out ways to balance that.” When participants did achieve a sense of balance between their work and family roles, their well-being was enhanced through reducing role conflict or strain.

**Enjoyment**

Participants’ sense of enjoyment was also an aspect of enhanced well-being. Joy noted, I talk about the struggles . . . , but all of that is overshadowed by the pure joy of being a mother. I may dream about having a job that is much more confined in hours. But, that is not my life. I like what I do. And I wouldn’t not want it this way.
Similarly, Josie talked both about how much she loved her work and loved being a parent. She then acknowledged, “I’m sure I’d be a different kind of parent if I did a job that wasn’t so demanding . . . or one that I didn’t like as much.” However, the enjoyment of her roles was more important to her. Participants’ enjoyment of both their work and family roles counteracted negative aspects of one or both roles and enhanced their well-being.

**Commitment to Social Justice**

Participants in this study recognized aspects of privilege associated with their faculty roles, which they used to contribute to social justice and social good. Although social justice was not something participants could necessarily attain, they all worked to be socially just and to contribute to students’ understandings of social justice. Of teaching pre-service teachers, Elizabeth said, "There is a privilege associated with the fact that I [teach] people who are going to be working with children. I utilize that privilege to try to make an impact on the way in which school leaders will serve specific populations." Of her research and publications, Elizabeth noted,

> I realize the power and privilege that I have because I am a faculty member and I try to utilize that in a way to make sure that people who have been deemed invisible are visible, and people who have been silenced are not silenced.

Similarly, Josie credited her sexual orientation for benefitting her faculty role as she utilized her social capital for social good. Josie stated, "Being queer has supported my faculty role in that I'm doing scholarship that needs to be done, where there are gaps in the literature." Filling in the gaps in literature is one way Josie contributed to social justice. This social justice lens relates directly to work-family enrichment resources of perspectives gained by participants, which I will further address.
Work-Family Enrichment Resources

In relation to Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) work-family enrichment model, participants discussed resources, which are “asset[s] that may be drawn on when needed to solve a problem or cope with a challenging situation” (p. 80). Each of the five categories of resources within Greenhaus and Powell’s model was generated and transferred by at least four participants. Some participants reported resources (i.e., skills and perspectives, psychological and physical, social-capital, flexibility, and material resources) generated in their roles both as mothers and their roles as faculty members that promoted positive affect and/or heightened performance in the other role. In most cases, the transferal of resources related to participants’ roles as faculty mothers and less so to being queer faculty members or queer mothers. I bring attention to the instances where participants’ sexual orientation was an aspect of resource generation or transferal. In Chapter VI, I further discuss how queerness fits in the work-family enrichment model.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Role</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Family Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inst. &amp; Aff.</td>
<td>Flexibility (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inst. &amp; Aff.</td>
<td>Cultural Capital (1)</td>
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<td>Inst.</td>
<td>Material Resources (4)</td>
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*Figure 1.* Queer faculty mothers’ work-family enrichment.
This figure illustrates the direction and paths of resource generation and transfer. The number following the resource indicates the number of participants who referred to the category of resource. Each arrow is marked with the path for transfer (inst. = instrumental, aff. = affective). The square with the upward arrow represents an increase in positive affect in that role itself.

As noted in Figure 1, all participants referred to flexibility resources generated in their faculty roles that were transferable to their mothering roles. Six participants referred to skills and perspective resources generated in either their faculty or mothering role that were transferable to the other role. Additionally, a majority of participants referred to social capital resources (5), material resources (4), and psychological and physical resources (4).

Where possible, I note the path for resource transfer, whether instrumental (direct instrumental performance effect) or affective, according to Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) model. Instrumental transfers occur when resources are transferred directly from one role to the other role. For example, in this study, flexibility generated in participants’ work roles directly enhanced their performance in their family roles. Affective (i.e., mood- or emotion-related) pathways for work-family enrichment occur when the amount or importance of the resource transfer in turn increases the person’s positive affect. Greenhaus and Powell noted, “Therefore, there are two components of the affective path to enrichment: (1) the effect of resources on positive affect in a role and (2) the effect of positive affect in a role on functioning in the other role” (p. 82). In this study, for example, interpersonal skills participants gained in their family roles both increased their positive affects in their family roles and their skill and functioning in their work roles. For the purpose of this study, I focus primarily on instrumental and affective resource transfers from one role to the other.
Flexibility

According to Greenhaus and Powell, “Flexibility . . . refers to discretion to determine the timing, pace, and location at which role requirements are met” (2006, p. 80, italics in original). Participants shared experiences of each of these three varieties of flexibility. Additionally, they shared experiences that fall into an additional category of flexibility; participants told stories that illustrate their discretion to determine how role requirements are met, which I refer to as “manner.” In this section, I present participants’ experiences of flexibility in relation to timing, pace, location, and manner.

Timing. Kate described faculty flexibility in timing of role requirements. She said, “I have the kind of job in which I put in the hours and, except for class schedules, I can start and stop my work whenever I need to.” Kate credited her department for being “incredibly supportive about scheduling [her] teaching between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.,” which she noted, “is a necessary part of [her] being able to juggle everything.” Kate also discussed how she and her wife (who is not employed in academia) made decisions about the “heavy-lifting” with regard to their children’s schedules based primarily on her flexible work schedule.

Sophie and her wife, who is also a faculty member, coordinated their teaching with their daughter in mind. Sophie said,

My wife and I are lucky enough to be able to organize our teaching schedules so that we aren’t teaching at the same time, so there is always someone on-tap to be home with our daughter if she gets sick. In some ways, that is the great part of being an academic – the flexibility built into your schedule.

Joy mentioned that she “still work[s] very long hours – often around the kids’ schedules.” She also referred to the benefits of flexibility in choosing the timing of various tasks within her
faculty role as it relates to her mothering role: “There are only so many things that a faculty member will have agency over. I try to schedule classes that will be the least disruptive on my family life.” She went on to acknowledge that she could not always make that choice:

But I don’t always have a choice and I want to be a good colleague and so sometimes, I have to teach the night class. I kick and scream while I do it; because that’s a night I miss dinner and ... [when] they go to bed. But I also recognize my colleagues without kids don’t necessarily want to be here at night either. So, I think more carefully about all of it.

Josie credited her work flexibility for assisting her in conceiving her second child. Josie said, “With my second kid, ... I went through about two-and-a-half years of fertility treatment. ... I had a flexible schedule, so I could get to the doctor as soon as I ovulated. The flexibility I had as a faculty member mattered.”

Participants acknowledged how the need for flexibility in their faculty roles changed over time. Of having school-aged children, ProfMean said, “It was hard for me to teach before 9 o’clock because my kids had to get to school. I had to make sure they were where they needed to be before I came to the university.” Kate noted,

The older my children get, the less scheduling restrictions I have, which makes everything easier. They get themselves to and from school. So, that is a huge amount of reduction in the stress of the schedule. And as they have gotten older, they are more independent. They walk to school, walk home, get their own snacks, and do their homework.
In each of the experiences participants shared about flexibility in timing, the resource was generated in their work role, which affected their family role via both instrumental and affective pathways.

**Pace.** Participants told stories of flexible pace in terms of time off work, timing of promotion, and timing of work-related tasks. About flexible time off work, Liz noted, “I’m . . . flexible with myself. If I need to take time off work, I have no regrets about having to do so.”

Joy talked about the flexibility of her pace toward promotion: “I would like to become a full professor, but not at the expense of my family. So, I will do it as I am able to. And I know I won't regret that decision.” Joy additionally discussed her choice to slow down the pace of her work toward publication.

Sophie also talked about her pace in regard to work-related tasks, research and publication. She said,

I move a little bit more slowly in my own research and publication. That is partly about my desire to spend more time with my daughter and partly about being in a different moment in my career, when I want to try to do the work that I want to do rather than just being insane and pushing myself forward as fast as possible.

Joy addressed the flexible pace in terms of other work-related tasks. She talked about delaying grading assignments to spend time with family. She noted, “I’m very honest with [students] about that. I fight it; I get up at unreasonable times . . . and . . . do what I can.”

Nearly all participants referred to the slowed pace that occurred in their faculty life immediately after becoming a mother. Tenure attainment additionally affected pace (see work climate). ProfMean identified that, for her, “Parenthood affected my experience of work because it made me need to prioritize my children. . . . when your kids needed something, it had to be
done. Everything – job included – had to take second seat.” Josie noted, “Being a mother and a queer faculty member, you have to switch priorities. . . . Pre-kids, I could have spent all day, every day working. I was not a life-balance person pre-kids. So, that has changed for sure.”

Again, in each of the experiences participants shared about flexibility in pace, the resource was generated in their work role, which supported their family role via both instrumental and affective pathways. It is important to note that this flexibility in pace is also likely related to the fact that all participants had acquired tenure.

**Location.** Participants also shared experiences of flexibility in work location. Joy noted, “I am happy to have the flexibility that I don’t have to go to campus every day.” Liz felt similarly. She said, “If I need to stay home from work or work from home, I can do that. During the summers, I have no obligations, so I work a lot at home . . . It isn’t rigid.” Elizabeth experienced some turmoil within her department and she also discussed the benefit of flexibility in location:

> One of my colleagues said, “Elizabeth, only come to campus if you have to. . . It’s a hostile environment. . . . Otherwise, be in a place where you feel safe and you can do your important work. . . . There’s no rule that says when you have to be here. You come when you need to.” So, I have taken that advice seriously and have adjusted my life accordingly.

In addition to the appreciated flexibility of being able to work from home, Sophie talked about the flexibility of location as she and her wife benefitted from taking sabbaticals outside their state. Sophie said,

> We have thrived . . . as a family, spending time in other places and having different kinds of experiences. There’s a way in which we’ve really leveraged that possibility, which
does not exist in other realms of work, as something that is both about our academic work but is also about the possibilities that allows for us as a family. Leaving town and having a different life elsewhere, a new set of experiences and a new set of associations, on some level balances the level of isolation we feel here since we don’t have really close queer friends here. One of the ways we’ve dealt with that has been to go away. That has been really positive, and it is a possibility that is facilitated by being a faculty member and by what the tenure-track, tenured landscape allows.

Unsurprisingly, in speaking about participants’ experiences of flexible location, they described flexibility that was generated in their faculty roles that then transferred to their family roles via both instrumental and affective pathways.

**Manner.** Because faculty members are specialists in their fields of study and have academic freedom, there is a degree to which they can determine how they will meet their faculty role requirements. Participants told stories that illustrated this discretion. I classify this flexibility in a fourth category: *manner.*

After Elizabeth’s director referred to Elizabeth’s research agenda as “lines of bullshit,” he tried to persuade Elizabeth to research different “hot topics.” Elizabeth explained how she maintained the flexibility of manner:

> It was interesting, because if I continued [my lines of inquiry], he was trying to let me know what the negative consequences could be. . . . But, I proceeded to research what I am most passionate about and it really didn’t matter to me . . . [LGBTQ community members’] stories were important to my research.

Elizabeth’s faculty-related flexibility in this way benefitted her positive affect in that she maintained her passion, sense of purpose, and priorities. This aligns with Greenhaus and
Powell’s (2006) affective path to work-family enrichment in that it contributed to her self-efficacy. Furthermore, as a gay faculty member, the sexual orientation aspect of her identity is particularly salient here.

Josie also exercised flexibility of manner. When she had her first child at the beginning of a semester, she was not on maternity leave, but her department did not assign her to teach for the semester. She described the way she fulfilled her non-teaching faculty duties for that semester, “I came to work all the time, I just strapped her on and came to work. . . . [I brought] her to dissertation defenses or whatever.” This flexibility enabled Josie to simultaneously fulfill requirements of both her faculty and mothering roles. Many women do not have the option to bring their baby to work and would therefore have to take a formal maternity leave or arrange for child-care during this time. The other participants who utilized modified or informal parental leaves also exercised and benefitted from this form of flexibility of manner.

In summary, participants shared stories about timing, pace, location, and manner of role requirements. In the aforementioned instances of flexibility, participants generated these resources primarily in their faculty roles, which benefitted them in direct and indirect instrumental ways in their family roles as well as affectively in their faculty roles.

**Skills and Perspectives**

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) identified skills and perspectives as another of the five types of resources in their theoretical model of work-family enrichment. “Skills refer to a broad set of task-related cognitive and interpersonal skills, coping skills, multitasking skills, and knowledge and wisdom derived from role experiences” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80). While skills are task-related, perspectives are thought-related. “Perspectives involve new ways of perceiving or handling situations” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80). Through perspectives
generated in one role, a person’s outlook on much more than just that role may change. In the present study, six participants discussed skills and perspectives that were generated in one or both role affecting the other role (mother or faculty member). In some cases, participants discussed their skills and perspectives in a natural overlapping manner and I note the connections.

**Skills.** Riggio, Tucker, and Coffaro (1989) identified empathy as multidimensional and as a social or interpersonal skill. Multiple participants talked about empathic inter-personal skills generated in one role that enhanced or affected the other role. Joy noted, “I know how being a mother affects being a faculty member. Being a mother heightens my empathy.” Kate also benefitted from increased empathy as a mother, which transferred into her faculty role. Kate described,

> I had a meeting with a graduate student recently in which she ended up being visibly distressed about her own work-life balance. She has a baby. And she was crying. I was able to sit down and comfort her. We talked about how you work with a baby. So, my personal experience helped me communicate with her, and she was probably more willing to talk with me about her own experience than if I didn’t also have kids.

Similarly, Liz credited being a mother with increasing her empathy. She noted that she had become more accommodating in her course policies (e.g., attendance and make-up examinations). Liz also discussed how being a lesbian related to her empathy; she said, “The only benefit of my being a lesbian as a faculty member is that it has made me more compassionate toward other people.”

**Perspectives.** Participants frequently discussed changes in their perspectives. Participants described the perspectives they gained in their parenting roles as further compelling
them to influence the social good. For Elizabeth, whose daughter was adopted from another
country and was frequently one of the only students of color in her school setting, being her
daughter’s mother had given her a new perspective. Personally, Elizabeth credited the
perspective she gained as a mother for strengthening her professionally. In teaching, Elizabeth
shared her daughter’s experiences navigating prejudice in school. Elizabeth was motivated by
her desire for children like her daughter to have more positive experiences in school. She said,
“Being a mom helps me support their understanding that they have a moral responsibility to look
out for for their students.”

Because her scholarly work focused on LGBTQ+ people, Josie credited the perspective
gained through work as affecting her parenting. As a result, she noted, “I make sure that my kids
are paying attention and are being kind to people who are perceived as and punished because of
being perceived as LGBTQ+. I make sure that my kids are being allies in the world.”

Joy also discussed a change in her perspective since she became a parent. She said,
“Being a mother has given me a healthier perspective. I don’t stress over things the way I used
to. . . I’m better able to kind of compartmentalize . . . and see the big picture in ways that I
didn’t before.” Like Josie, Joy described the mutually beneficial change in perspective from
each role. As a faculty member, Joy said, “I think it’s really important that I bring my full self to
the classroom, that I’m able to talk about my identity and some of my experiences as a parent in
a same-sex relationship or family.” Also, as a mother, Joy said

As a mother to kids with same-sex parents, I think about the kinds of things I want my
children to start learning at an early age. That translates from the classroom into my
parenting, and I am able to parent a little bit better. What I know of larger systems of
privilege and oppression from my teaching and research, I can teach on a four-year-old
level in some ways. . . . That is a really good thing. I’m proud of who I am as a mom.

Some of the knowledge I have because of what I do as a faculty member, I can start
instilling in my kids at a really young age.

Furthermore, Joy credited perspective gained through her sexual orientation for enhancing her
role as a faculty member. She shared, “I teach about systems of privilege and oppression, and
I’m able to do so based on my own experiences. . . . For me, being a lesbian enhances myself as
a teacher and a researcher.” Joy’s example is another atypical example of resource transfer that
related to sexual orientation.

Overlap of skills and perspectives. In discussing their experiences, it was not always
possible to parse out entirely the generation of skills versus the generation of perspectives, likely
due to an overlap of skills and perspectives. For example, Sophie addressed both when she
talked about the empathy (an inter-personal skill) and perspective she gained as a mother that
translated to her faculty role. "I think being a mother has definitely made me have a different
kind of ability to empathize and understand [my students’] experiences from a different
perspective." She later said, “As a mom, I have a different way of relating to my students. I see
them as someone’s children. I see them as people along the same trajectory that I see my
daughter on.” Sophie also said that this gave her a better vantage point on levels of parental
involvement, which was a frequent annoyance prior to her becoming a mother.

Josie, who taught aspiring educators, also benefitted from a change in perspective once
she became a mother, related to her identity as a queer parent. This perspective gained in her
family role transferred to her work role. She described,

I understand the significance of working with pre-service teachers better now that I have
kids who are in schools. In my classes, being a queer parent almost always comes up in
conversation.  The content of what I teach includes more queer topics and I teach it more passionately or intently because of my identity as a queer parent.  I am more likely to talk about my experiences in schools as a queer parent.  I have stories that I share about things to do and things not to do in working with students who have same-sex parents.  Working with pre-service teachers, I am more likely to include topics pertinent to LGBT people more often and with more fervency than I did before I had kids.  I do more to challenge pre-service teachers’ homophobia or transphobia because I imagine them working with my kids.  I’m more hard-core in that I don’t let homophobic or transphobic comments slide in the way I might have before.  I think, “If I don’t take care of this, my kid is going to have to take care of this” – and that is messed up!

Participants generated role-related skills and perspectives in both work and family roles. To a much more limited extent, participants also discussed skills and perspectives generated as the result of their sexual orientation.

Material Resources

Most participants referred to the acquisition of material resources, including “money and gifts obtained from work and family roles” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80), which benefitted them in another role. Of material resources, Elizabeth said, “As a faculty member, I have access to literature that I think other moms who identify as gay may not have access to.” This is another instance of a work-generated resource transferring to the sexual orientation aspect of a participant’s family role.

Multiple participants discussed their appreciation for the fact that their families could accompany them on work-related travel (to conferences, sabbaticals, etc.). Josie said, “They’ve traveled some places just because I had conferences there.” Like Josie, Sophie’s family has been
able to travel to some locations to which they may otherwise not have had access. Sophie shared, “We have thrived . . . as a family, spending time in other places and having different kinds of experiences. . . . And [that] is a possibility that is facilitated by being a faculty member and by what the tenure-track, tenured landscape allows.”

Other material resources participants appreciated include benefits, not all of which are necessarily material. Liz stated, “We get really good benefits through the university. I have job security.” Liz and her wife utilized a spousal-hiring policy after Liz was hired at her university, which she credited as a “big benefit.” Later, her partner took advantage of tuition remission to pursue a second degree, during which Liz covered her family on her health insurance, all benefits generated in her faculty role that had positive influence on her family via affective and instrumental paths of resource application. Both the spousal-hiring policy and the partner tuition remission are further examples of work-family enrichment that related directly to queer aspects of the family role.

Sophie’s experiences of faculty-related material resources were numerous and literally facilitated the process of her becoming a parent. She shared,

I want to emphasize the degree to which being a faculty member with this incredible flexible, well-remunerated, intellectually challenging, and exciting job facilitates parenthood in all kinds of ways, as much as it makes it challenging in others. . . . Being an academic actually made it easier for me to become a lesbian mom, because we had the financial resources and the ability to move ourselves out of state. . . . We ended up being really strategic. Well, part of it was also just dumb luck. My wife was able to get a fellowship that facilitated the whole process of having our daughter and my being able to adopt her in this other state.
This is an important consideration, as Sophie and her wife’s permanent faculty positions were in a state where Sophie was not legally able to adopt her daughter, who her wife gestated. The monetary resources generated in her faculty role enabled her, during a sabbatical year, to move to a state where she was legally able to adopt her daughter after establishing residency. This is an extraordinary example of the benefit of a resource generated in a work role as profoundly impactful on Sophie’s family role, to the extreme that Sophie would otherwise not be her daughter’s mother in the letter of the law. Again, this example illustrates the work-family enrichment material resource transferal from work to the queer aspect of a participant’s family role.

In this category of resources generated, participants shared experiences of material resources generated in their faculty roles that transferred to their family roles, many of which related directly to the sexual orientation aspect of their family roles. Material resources included salary and other benefits (e.g., school district, access to health care, access to fertility treatments). Some participants related material resources directly to social capital.

Social Capital

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) also acknowledged social capital as a resource that can be generated in one role and transferred to another. They utilized Adler and Kwon’s (2002, p. 17, as cited in Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80) definition of social capital: “the goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilized to facilitate action.” For the most part, participants in the present study shared experiences that align with social capital influence as a transferable resource (one of the two social capital aspects of Greenhaus and Powell’s model). Like skills and perspectives, social capital resources were more directly linked to the sexual orientation aspect of participants’ family roles.
For some participants, the social capital they gained as a faculty member allowed them to connect with other similar families and thereby reduce the isolation they may otherwise have felt as queer families. Josie's faculty role enabled her to connect her children with other children of same-sex parents. She said, "It is important to . . . connect my kids to other queer academics. And that is really doable here. . . those of us who are queer and have kids connect. . . my kids would never say they don't know any queer academic families." Joy's experiences echoed Josie's. Reflecting on her faculty role, Joy stated, "I can connect with other like-minded people. . . . There are a lot of like-minded people who aren't faculty members too, but specifically in regard to what I do, the kids can be exposed to other families like ours." This sentiment was certainly not shared by all participants, particularly those who had a difficult time connecting with other queer faculty parents (due to the size of the department or university and the degree to which they were able to network with other queer faculty parents on campus). For participants in this study, social capital resources were generated in work roles and transferred to family roles, particularly impacting them as queer parents, as well as affectively impacting them further in their work role.

Cultural capital. Although distinctively different than social capital, cultural capital is another resource that, particularly for one participant, was a valuable resource transferred from her work role to her family role. Kate's description of the cultural capital gained as a faculty member positively influencing her parenting role was compelling. Kate first shared about the privilege she experienced in that her family lives in an affluent neighborhood, while simultaneously experiencing a lack of opportunities associated with regard to race- and age-related discrimination,
Being a faculty member has a positive impact on my experiences as a queer mother, though. We live in a very affluent neighborhood. A mono-cultural neighborhood, with a lot of very educated people, and a lot of very educated stay-at-home moms. . . . Most of the mothers who drop off at the elementary school are 20 years younger than me. Everyone drives their four and five children in their gargantuan vehicles. And I feel like an alien from Mars with my obviously adopted kids, and as a lesbian, and as an older person. Our neighborhood is lovely and people are friendly, but I don't think that our children get the kinds of invitations that other kids get because people are afraid of us. The parents are afraid of us. . . . I think our children's social life is affected by the homophobia and the racism of the people around us, even though it isn't hostile; it just isn't intimate.

In this, Kate acknowledged that her faculty role has provided her family access to material resources (i.e., an affluent neighborhood and high performing schools) but she also noted her lack of social capital (i.e., her lack of influence or ability to fit in because of her adoptive motherhood, sexual orientation, and age). In contrast, she continued, describing the power of the cultural capital she experienced within the work environment,

But, every now and then, my kids come with me to campus and see a room full of people sit and want to hear what I have to say. On occasion, there are big events. I've been given an award on a stage in front of hundreds of people. And because of these experiences, my kids think, "Huh, this is a world where my mother has cultural capital." So, I have cultural capital as a university professor in a way that I do not have cultural capital as a second-class mom – a mom who didn't give birth, a mom who doesn't have
White kids, a mom who is older, a mom who is a lesbian. . . . I'm glad I get to live in the university world also, and that my kids get to see me in that other world. Clearly, the cultural capital Kate gained as a faculty member was meaningful to her in her family role. Her experience on campus provided a powerful counterpoint to her experience in her elementary school drop-off line, play-dates, birthday parties, and other social activities. Kate’s work-related cultural capital negated some of the lack of social capital related to her family role.

**Psychological Resources**

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) identified the fifth category of resource that can be generated in one role and transferred to another role as psychological and physical resources. Psychological resources “include positive self-evaluations” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 80). Physical resources refer to health-related constructs; however, participants did not discuss physical resources.

Participants shared stories that reflected their sense of pride in their work and their mothering. Joy said, “Being a mom has helped me see more the value of what I teach. . . . systems of inequality . . . I think ‘Yeah, it’s important that I’m teaching this.’ So, sometimes it makes me a little bit more proud of the work I do.” Joy also reflected that, as a parent, teaching her children about social justice issues was a source of pride: “I’m proud of who I am as a mom.” For Joy, both of these examples relate indirectly to her sexual orientation, because of the impact of teaching about systems of inequality and social justice issues.

Josie acknowledged a shift in her self-esteem. She shared,

I was a lot more nervous before having kids and getting full – I’ve become decreasingly nervous. Part of that is having kids and that you have to be pretty comfortable as a queer parent in the world when you have kids. You never get to hide your identity. So, I think
I feel braver. Or more confident. Or less anxious about those identities. It is hard to separate what is about rank and what is about parenting because those things happened simultaneously for me. My guess is that it is about both.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) included “positive emotions about the future” (p. 80) in this resource category as well. One of Kate’s quotes illustrates this particularly well. She described,

Making the world a better place becomes a little bit more urgent if you’re making it a better place, in part, for your own children. Being a mother motivates my commitment . . . to do a good job with young people who are going out to shape the world.

Kate’s, and several other participants’, hope for the future was directly influenced by her motherhood and clearly motivated her teaching and her sense of the gravity of the responsibility of teaching college students.

Participants did not discuss the generation of physical, or health-related, resources. However, again, participants’ experiences of psychological resources appear to be bi-directionally generated and transferable in that participants were, at times, unable to identify the source of the resource generation, but rather identified that it was likely a combination. Again, in this category of resources, to a limited extent, participants’ sexual orientation as an aspect of family-role was notable.

**Summary**

This chapter presented participants’ experiences as queer faculty mothers. Findings highlight the effect of work climate, the support participants benefit from in their multiple roles, and the additive effect of participants’ work and family roles on their well-being. Findings also suggest that work-family enrichment did occur for these women. In the next chapter, I present
my conclusions based on these findings and provide recommendations for future research as well as implications for practice.
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

In this study, I sought to understand the experiences of queer faculty mothers, particularly their experiences of work-family enrichment. In chapter V, I presented findings describing participants’ experiences of work climate, particularly as it related to their queer and parenting identities as well as their tenure and promotion processes; their sources of support; their perspectives on success; and their work-family enrichment resources. In this chapter, I summarize the findings through the lenses of the research questions, highlight connections to and extensions of the extant literature, and present conclusions through the lens of the conceptual framework: queering. I then provide implications for practice and future research. Finally, I offer my conclusions on this study.

Summary of Findings

The overarching research question guiding this study was “What are the experiences of queer faculty mothers who simultaneously navigate motherhood and academia?” Additionally, four subquestions informed this study.

1. How has parenting influenced the faculty life (i.e., teaching, research, service) of queer faculty mothers who have raised child(ren) prior to attaining tenure?
2. How do queer faculty mothers define success (as faculty members and as mothers)?
3. From whom/where do queer faculty mothers draw support?
4. What are their experiences of and responses to heteronormativity within the academy?

In Figure 2 and the following summary, I answer these questions. Work-Family Enrichment contributed to queer faculty mothers’ Enhanced Well-Being, both on its own and combined with Sources of Support and Work Climate (when positive, family-affirming, or supportive). Enhanced Well-Being, in turn, reinforced a positive Work Climate and Work-
Family Enrichment, which is represented by a bidirectional arrow. The arrow from Sources of Support to Enhanced Well-Being is one-directional, as the data from this study alone do not indicate it is bidirectional; this bears further research.

Figure 2. Experiences of queer faculty mothers.

To answer the first sub-question, parenting has influenced the faculty life of the participants in this study in several ways. Overwhelmingly, participants felt as though being a parent had made them a better faculty member in four ways: 1) through the enhancement of their empathy and understanding of student’s experiences, 2) through their reinvigorated purpose, 3) through their role-modeling alternative family structures for students, and 4) through their heightened commitment to social justice work. Participants benefit from the sense of commonality and community with other faculty parents. As the result of their parenting role, a
few participants needed to utilize, whether formally or informally, some form of parenting-related human resource policies and procedures (e.g., parental leave, tenure clock stop) in order to meet their faculty role requirements. Some participants have had negative experiences in their departments as the result of their parenting role (predominantly in the form of feeling isolated at times, difficulty in balancing multiple demanding roles at once, and increased expectations for service), but all participants identified positive and enjoyable experiences of parenting (as well as their enjoyment of their faculty roles). Overall, participants felt as though parenting had more positively than negatively influenced their faculty lives.

The research design and implementation did not enable me fully to answer the second sub-question, *How do queer faculty mothers define success (as faculty members and as mothers)?* Likely due to the salience of participants’ careers in the context of my interview protocol, I cannot offer a formal definition of participants’ success as mothers. However, the design did allow me to identify that participants were motivated by both objective and subjective measures of career success. Participants in this study have already attained traditional objective markers of career success; they are tenured faculty members who have been promoted to associate or full professorships and have therefore accomplished the teaching, research, and service requirements set out by their departments and their fields in general.

As Greenhaus and Powell noted, “Work experiences and family experiences can have additive effects on well-being” (2006, p. 73). The findings of this study confirm prior findings that work and family roles can contribute to enhanced well-being by way of additive role enhancement. For participants in this study, enhanced well-being was a representation of their subjective career success. Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom (2005) noted, “*Subjective career success* may be defined as the individual’s internal apprehension and evaluation of his or her
career, across any dimensions that are important to that individual” (p. 179, italics in original). Findings of this study reveal four primary ways in which participants’ work and family roles combined to enhance their well-being and which were valuable factors in their subjective career success.

Participants’ ability to prioritize allowed them to hold one role as more meaningful at some times and less meaningful at others during their careers, or even during their day. Their attempt to balance roles (i.e., triaging and parsing necessary tasks out), often in tandem with their partners, allowed them to experience the important and necessary requirements within each role. (It is important to note that in the context of this study, “balance” was not an entirely realistic goal for participants, nor was it something they constantly sought. However, when they did achieve a sense of balance, or greater balance, their well-being was enhanced.) Being a mother and a faculty member both enhanced their sense of purpose and well-being. Positive perspectives and information gained through their roles further enhanced their well-being by compelling and preparing them to work toward social justice. Additionally, aspects of work-family enrichment, particularly those factors which supported participants’ family roles, were valuable facets of subjective career success as they supported participants’ mothering roles, which were important to them.

To answer the third subquestion, faculty mothers drew support from their colleagues, partners, and students. Supportive colleagues helped participants feel included, valued, and connected and also affirmed their family roles. Supportive partners worked as a team with participants in terms of family tasks and prioritization; they listened to participants and understood that they have multiple roles; and some partners shared participants’ commitments to social justice. Students supported participants in demonstrating patience and offering
perspectives that participants’ colleagues may not have been able to (e.g., the student who informed Josie about the queer community in the city when she interviewed for her faculty position).

Lastly, to answer the fourth subquestion, participants had varied experiences with and responses to heteronormativity. I will discuss this in the section, Conceptual Framework Considerations: Queering.

**Contextualization of Findings**

There are several considerations related to the findings of this study that are important to note, particularly for early-career or aspiring queer faculty women reading this study. First, the participants in this study have highly contextualized experiences in terms of their age, time since tenure, and whether they carried their child (or whether that was a choice they could make). Because participants ranged in age from 33- to 66-years-old, their experiences must be considered in that context (e.g., a great deal of social and institutional change has occurred since ProfMean had young children while on her tenure-track).

One participant went through tenure and promotion as recently as about one year prior to the time of her interview, while another participant received tenure and promotion over 25 years ago (other participants earned tenure and promotion between those two extremes). The length of time between participants’ interviews and their attaining tenure and promotion makes possible that some participants may have experienced some degree of memory loss or revision, similar to the way women who birth a child may forget or modify memories of labor pain and birth experience over time (Waldenström, 2003). This bears further research.

Lastly, participants in this study had varied experiences around the choice of whether to carry their child(ren), whether their partner carried their child(ren), or whether to adopt their
child(ren). One participant attempted to carry a child but was unable to become pregnant. Some participants knew they never wanted to bear a child. One participant had her children in the context of her marriage to a man prior to her fully coming out. Although there were only seven participants in this study, their narratives represent numerous different aspects of choice (and lack of choice) about how to become parents which are also important considerations in their experiences.

**Connections to and Extensions of Extant Research**

Findings from this study both confirm and extend extant research. I address this discussion through connections to the research on faculty mothers, queer faculty members, and queer parents. Lastly, I present the confirmation and extension the present study provides for work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

**Faculty Mothers**

In multiple and varied ways, the present study confirms the literature on faculty mothers, most notably Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012). Participants in this study struggled with feelings of legitimacy, simultaneously managing work and family, and work climate. Participants also benefitted from positive aspects of parenting. The present study also extends faculty mother research in two key ways: tension between increased opportunity and increased workload was compounded by participants’ sexual orientations and participants’ experience of commonality with other faculty parents transcended the dissonance of being queer in departments of predominantly straight colleagues.

The present study confirms Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) and Dallimore’s (2003) findings that faculty mothers struggle with feelings of illegitimacy and unprofessionalism and Meyers’ (2012) finding that “having children is seen as a deviation from being a ‘serious
“scholar”” (p. 84). Specifically, several participants alluded to or spoke directly of the perceived incompatibility of the tenure clock with their decision about how and when to have children. Participants struggled with whether they were taken seriously as faculty members because they are also mothers. As Ward and Wolf-Wendel asserted, “For the most part the traditional, normative view of the professor – as a single-minded academic resources, free from external distractions – has remained” (2012, p. 8). As in Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s findings, with notable exceptions (e.g., Joy, ProfMean) participants in this study additionally feared the way they might be perceived if they utilized work/family policies.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) referred to their findings regarding managing work and family in the early career, “‘silver linings and clouds,’” (p. 49) because their participants (faculty mothers with young children) experienced clouds (negative aspects) of academia concurrently with the silver linings (positive experiences). The present study confirms that research. Further, as with Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) research, all participants in this study focused more on synergy of the positive aspects of their parenting and faculty roles than on the negative aspects of the academic lifestyle.

Regarding work climate, participants in the present study reported feelings of competing demands between work and family roles, confirming multiple prior studies (e.g., Meyers, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Additionally, participants’ experiences of the normative disbelief about the mismatch between faculty and family life (e.g., Mason et al., 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) had only two exceptions. Those participants shared stories of their experience with very flexible and supportive supervisors and departments, as well as their departments’ commitment to diversity and social justice; this likely is related to these exceptions. It is important to consider the goodness of fit participants experienced in their departments as it
related to departmental messages and institutional fit. Participants’ experiences of commonality with their colleagues represent one benefit of institutional and departmental fit.

Overwhelmingly, participants in this study talked about the benefits of parenting, most of which were highlighted in the section of findings that particularly address work-family enrichment. This confirms not only Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) framework, but also numerous prior studies that reported benefits of parenting (e.g., Jacobs & Winslow, 2004a, 2004b; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004a, 2012; Wolfinger et al., 2008), particularly those that referred to the perspective and ‘bigger picture’ gained as parents.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) research highlighted a tension between increased opportunity and increased workload for the women who did break through. This tension seems ever-present for participants in this study as well. However, as an extension of Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s position, many participants in this study (e.g., Josie, Elizabeth, Kate, Sophie, Liz) experienced the increased opportunity and workload as further complicating their roles as queer mothers. This was evident in their departmental tokenizing expectations for service and in their own tendencies to offer informal mentoring.

Another interesting difference between the present study and Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2012) research revolves around isolation vs. commonality. Although some participants in this study expressed the “only one” phenomena (i.e., for them, the only queer mother in their department or one of few on campus) that Ward and Wolf-Wendel linked to STEM disciplinary-specific cultures in their research, the more resounding theme in the present study was the commonality that being a parent gave them with other faculty members. The commonality of being a faculty parent transcended the dissonance of being queer in an environment of predominantly straight faculty members. Although it was not so dichotomous as queer or parent,
for participants in this study, sharing the identity of parent with many of their colleagues at times negated the differences related to their sexual orientation. Time and time again, participants shared how much they enjoyed having common experiences to talk about with their peers (i.e., parenting small-talk seems to be the default small-talk topic) and the ability to bring their families to departmental events.

Lastly, participants in this study did not identify issues with childcare options to the same degree as prior research suggested (e.g., Mason et al., 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). One participant specifically discussed utilizing early childcare that was associated with her university, which was easily accessible. One other participant in particular identified the difficulty of summer childcare options (i.e., the struggle to find affordable and desirable activities to keep her children happy and to offer her productivity time). Participants’ experiences in this study may not support the extant research for multiple reasons: because participants benefitted from more egalitarian approaches to co-parenting than the faculty mother research (i.e., dominantly heterosexual faculty mothers) identified, they may not have the same need for emergency childcare that their heterosexual peers in other studies did; participants may work at universities that are already supporting faculty parents in the way of offering campus-based childcare facilities; and multiple participants in this study spoke of bringing their children to conferences or on research trips, which may indicate that is supported by their universities (at least socially, if not financially).

Queer Faculty

Because of the inclusion criteria for the present study (i.e., successful tenure and promotion), confirmation of the research on outness in academia (e.g., Reinert, 2011; Stuck, 1997; Tierney, 1997) may be somewhat limited. To varying degrees, all participants in this
study were out in their professional lives, (e.g., not all participants were out in the classroom, unless it was relevant to the course topic in some way). However, confirming McNaron’s (1997) finding that the majority of lesbian and gay faculty members believed their sexual orientation positively influenced their teaching, many participants in this study believed their sexual orientation positively influenced their faculty roles as they included LGBTQ and other minoritized groups in their teaching when appropriate and felt a social justice imperative in their work.

Notably, for multiple participants in this study, doing queer research or teaching queer topics seemed to be synonymous with outness and visibility on campus. This likely reflects the assumption (though not truth) that only queer people research queer topics. Unfortunately, some participants did experience a lack of administrative or departmental support for their queer-related topics of scholarship, which may confirm Vaccaro’s finding that LGBT faculty perceived a “lack of support for their teaching and scholarship” (2012, p. 439). With one exception, participants did not believe their sexual orientation influenced their tenure and promotion processes, contrasting Talburt’s (2002) finding.

The majority of participants in this study described neutral or supportive campus climates. However, the few participants (most notably Kate) who did experience hostile climates did describe harassment and negative work environments, and attributed them to their sexual orientation. This confirms Rankin et al.’s (2010) finding that LGBTQQ individuals perceive a more hostile campus climate than their heterosexual peers. What was more apparent in the present study were individual experiences, which varied by participant, of heteronormativity and heteronormative expectations and assumptions. I will address this further in Conceptual Framework Considerations: Queering.
Work climate mattered to participants in this study. As Rankin (2003) asserted, “The climate on college campuses not only affects the creation of knowledge, but also has a significant impact on members of the academic community who, in turn, contribute to the creation of the campus environment” (p. 8). Rankin asserted, “A welcoming and inclusive climate is grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction” (2003, p. 38). Several participants in the present study benefitted from a welcoming and inclusive climate, primarily in the form of queer- and family-affirming work environments. Participants who worked in these affirming environments benefitted from perceptions of support, feeling as though they mattered to their colleagues, feeling connected to others at work (including concepts of solidarity), the incorporation of their identities in their professional work and research, and reported less microaggressions than those who did not work in environments that they described as affirming.

**Queer Parents**

As described by Goldberg (2010), participants in this study had varied experiences related to their decisions to become parents. ProfMean became a parent within the context of her heterosexual marriage, prior to her coming out as lesbian. Other participants became parents through insemination, adoption, or co-parenting. Some participants in this study did experience difficulties around adoption (e.g., joint adoption, second parent adoption), confirming Shapiro’s (2012) report on legal issues for LGBT adults. Following the *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) ruling and since the completion of this study’s participant interviews, it became legal for all same-sex couples in the U.S. to access joint adoption (however, “The law in Mississippi is not in effect, pending the appeal of a federal court decision that the law violates the Constitution” [Family Equality Council, 2016, para. 2]). For queer mothers who intend to adopt at this time, recent
legal changes likely would lessen the impact of, if not negate entirely, some of the stresses experienced by participants in the present study.

All participants in this study reported their partners as a source of support and seemed to have developed systems of parenting that reflect equity in consideration of their and their partner’s work roles (e.g., tag-team parenting). This confirms Goldberg’s (2010) research about equitable- and Dunne’s (1997) research about egalitarian-approaches to parenting.

As these findings are not generalizable to non-participants, I cannot confirm Johnson’s (2012) synthesis of research that “lesbian mothers appear to be as or more effective than heterosexual parents in establishing functional households, adult parenting relationships, and performing as parents to raise well-adjusted and highly functional children and adolescents” (p. 37); however, participants in this study shared stories that supported their functional households, parenting relationships, and parenting skills.

Additionally, as this study did not include participants’ partners, nor was it longitudinal, its comparison to the National Lesbian Family Study (NLFS) (Gartrell et al., 1999, 2000, 2006) is limited. Participants in the present study described their social supports, discussed their desire for their children to avoid homophobic treatment, and parented in egalitarian manners. In contrast to participants in the NLFS, participants in this study did not tell of toning down their lesbian visibility as a way to help their children avoid experiencing homophobia, but rather discussed educating themselves and their children about dealing with homophobia and also their imperative for educating their students in a social justice lens in an effort to “mak[e] the world a better place” (Kate) and improve experiences for others. This is a possible extension of their findings.
Work-Family Enrichment

Through the lens of the theoretical framework, the findings of the present study support Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) model of work-family enrichment. All participants reported resources or assets generated in their home or work roles that transferred to the other role and therefore promoted positive work-family life interaction, particularly among participants who worked in family-affirming departments. As I do not know whether participants reported all instances of work-family enrichment and their ability to “expand their resources through [work-family] role enactment” (Maertz & Boyar, 2011, p. 74), I do not have a full grasp on how much participants may have underestimated the generation of work-family enrichment resources, as was cautioned by Maertz and Boyar (2011). This is a limitation, in part, of research with human subjects; the data were limited to the stories that participants choose to share during the short time we spoke, were highly contextual, and influenced by many factors I discuss in the limitations section.

Elements of work-family enrichment related to being faculty mothers, far more frequently than related to being queer mothers or queer faculty members. Among family-related role aspects, participants shared far more examples in which parenting fit this model than examples in which queerness did. However, there were instances where work-family enrichment and resource generation related to participants’ queer faculty roles or queer mother roles. To a limited extent, participants shared experiences of flexibility resource generation and transferal, skills and perspectives resource generation and transferal, and psychological resource generation and transferal that related to their sexual orientation. To a larger extent, social capital and material resources seem to be the aspects of work-family enrichment that related most to participants’ sexual orientation. As role salience moderates both affective and instrumental
pathways, the salience of participants’ sexual orientation as it related to their parenting and/or work roles is a consideration. As faculty life and motherhood are both greedy roles (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2012), this likely contributed to the role salience during interviews and may explain why participants shared fewer work-family enrichment experiences more directly related to sexual orientation.

There are three ways that the findings of the present study extended Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) model regarding flexibility. Due to the nature of faculty work, in addition to the flexibility in timing, pace, and location, participants in the present study benefitted from flexibility in how their work role requirements are met. I have called this manner.

Furthermore, a few participants in this study moved from one state to another to pursue faculty roles after they had already become parents. This seems to imply that parenting offers a degree of flexibility in location, as participants were able to move for their faculty roles. Participants did not necessarily acknowledge this. Participants also did not acknowledge the flexibility in timing that family roles offered. For example, several participants mentioned doing work from home, reflecting a sort of flexibility on the part of both their work and family roles; rather, participants seemed to have framed this flexibility as solely work role flexibility. Because participants all attained tenure when their children were young (from infancy to young school age), the flexibility in timing these faculty mothers seem to have gained from their family roles may be related to age of children and thus may have been less if their children were older.

Third, Greenhaus and Powell’s (2006) model includes social capital and economic capital (as represented in material resources), but fails to include the third form of capital: cultural capital. Kate’s experience in particular captures the importance of cultural capital and its value as a resource that can be transferred from either the work- or family-role to the other. Kate’s
cultural capital gained at work negated some of the lack of social capital she experienced in some aspects of her family role. I believe this model would be more robust were it to formally include cultural capital.

From participants’ experiences, it seems as though the work-life enrichment was overwhelmingly in favor of the family role. Participants found being a faculty member made it easier to be a mother much more so than being a mother made it easier to be a faculty member. The academic workplace seems to have less capacity for non-traditional approaches to work than the family-unit seems to have for non-traditional approaches to family. This is likely related to the degree of relative control that participants had over their family unit (for the most part, participants had control over when and how they became parents; they chose their partners; they worked together with their partners to develop their joint approach to parenting) in opposition to the lack of (or at least much less) control participants had over their work, particularly prior to attaining tenure and promotion.

**Conceptual Framework Considerations: Queering**

Considering the term *queer* as a verb was the conceptual framework of this study. Essentially, I considered how participants have queered notions of family and faculty roles within the academy. As previously noted, in this study I focused specifically on the sexuality and familial aspects of queering more so than on gender aspects. However, heteronormativity is inextricably linked to both homophobia/heterosexism and sexism (Harek, 2004, 2015).

*To queer* is to resist heteronormativity and social norms (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Oswald et al., 2005), to be “at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” (Berry, 2014, p. 62), and to challenge binary notions of sexuality and gender (Plummer, 2011). Additionally, Goldberg (2010) asserted of queer parents,
Even while they actively “do gender” and “do parenthood,” lesbian and gay parents and their families also challenge and expose the meaning and limits of gender – and inextricably, standard or traditional conceptualizations of family – by virtue of their participation in parenthood. (p. 11)

Thus, queering includes being, in non-traditional, non-normative ways, as a form of resistance, in addition to the aforementioned more active (i.e., behaviors and change) concepts of queering. Queering involves both *doing* and *being*. As Oswald et al. suggested, it is in the processes of doing gender, sexuality, and family that challenges the binary norms of “‘real’ males and ‘real’ females versus gender ‘deviants,’ ‘natural’ sexuality versus ‘unnatural’ sexuality, and ‘genuine’ families versus ‘pseudo’ families” (2005, p. 144). However, queering is not necessarily constant, as Oswald et al. asserted, “Most people’s lives are a combination of resisting and upholding heteronormativity” (2009, p. 50).

The women in this study created their families and their academic success in spite of obstacles (e.g., isolation, harassment, hostility, aggression) and heteronormative constructs (e.g., differential taxing of benefits, loss of status, differential treatment when compared with their straight parenting counterparts, and pressure to avoid LGBTQ research topics). The academy must come to understand and acknowledge that, as Goss (1997) asserted, “*We are not degaying or delesbianing ourselves by describing ourselves as family*. In fact, we are Queering the notion of family and creating families reflective of our life choices” (p. 12, italics in original).

In this study, participants queered the academy and notions of family as they existed and succeeded in spite of academia’s inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) and the concept of the ideal worker (Acker, 1990). As Sophie noted, at her university, “there is a complete failure to recognize the non-normative.” Sophie counteracted that by choosing to be visible to her students
and prospective students, colleagues, and the administration via discussing queer topics in class, posting about her queer-related research on her faculty page, and being active in multiple diversity-related university committees. For Sophie, this was active resistance and queering.

Participants in the present study have attained tenure and promotion within their academic departments, therefore transcending some of the gender inequality that may be present for other queer faculty mothers. Furthermore, participants were all professionally out and many had actively incorporated their sexual orientation into their work (via teaching, research, or service, where appropriate). However participants still were faced with “gendered and sexualized assumptions” (Acker, 2006, p. 444). Evidence of this is found in participants’ stories about assumed heterosexuality, heteronormativity and bias, and expectations related to gender stereotypes.

Several participants have been faced with the assumed heterosexuality Acker (2006) acknowledged is present in many organizational processes and interactions. Additionally, most participants experienced multiple incidences of heteronormativity and bias at work. For example, several participants experienced being perceived as a “second class mom” (Kate) or of “not really [being] seen as a mom” (Liz) because of the way that they became parents, which challenged the family norm that a child is or should be biologically related to both parents. They “creat[ed] families reflective of [their] life choices” (Goss, 1997), effectively queering family, both in being and doing.

Kate and Liz experienced gender and heterosexist stereotypes. Kate adopted her children, who were also a different race than her. The combination of those realities compounded in her “second class mom” feeling (that she wasn’t a “real mom” because she did not give birth to her children, and on top of that, they did not even look as though they could
have been her biological children). Additionally, she did not follow her department chair’s heterosexist unwritten rule; that “lesbians are well and good if they just stay where they belong and lay subordinate.” Kate perceived her chair deemed her audacious in expecting to be treated like straight parents by requesting parental leave when she adopted her children.

Furthermore, Kate believed some treated her as though as a lesbian mother she “undermin[ed] the work of a whole generation of feminists by being a mother,” a form of horizontal hostility (“whereby members of marginalized groups police each other’s behavior and/or appearance” [Launius & Hassel, 2014]). Kate believed others thought she had undermined feminist activism by becoming a mother, thereby becoming less feminist and more feminine. However, Kate’s choice to become a mother through adoption, to demand the same leave available to her straight peers, and to do so in spite of the horizontal hostility she faced actively queered the academy and notions of genuine family (Oswald et al., 2005).

Similarly, at work, Liz felt like she was not perceived as a ‘real mom’ because she is “the second parent,” in her colleagues’ minds, her wife (the ‘real mom’) was supposed to be “at home with the kid.” Liz was expected to be “more like a dad” and, as she said, “dads are supposed to be workaholics with a wife who stays home to take care of the kids.” This directly reveals Acker’s (1990) concept of the ideal worker at play in Liz’s department.

Because Liz and Kate are lesbians and not biological mothers to their children, they experience this bias and are, at times, treated or expected to perform more like biological males. This is a connection to and extension of Acker’s (2006) position on inequality regimes; sexual orientation, particularly being a queer mother who did not gestate her child, seems to be compounded with gender and sexuality biases. In essence, these participants’ colleagues treated them as failed women because they did not gestate their children. Therefore, these particular
mothers were instead, in some senses, expected to behave as biological men/fathers. However, they were not treated with the privilege biological males would be afforded and consequently were also treated as failed men. They were treated neither as “‘real’ males” [nor] ‘real’ females” (Oswald et al., 2005, p. 144), but instead as “gender ‘deviants’” (Oswald et al., 2005, p. 144).

ProfMean’s experience with butchness provides another experience with heteronormativity and gender stereotypes, but one that worked more in her favor. As ProfMean noted, her butchness afforded her “a certain kind of power,” which she acknowledged was because “[butchness] partakes of the stereotypically male,” which was “kind of an advantage in an atmosphere like a university.” This must also be contextualized with the reminder that ProfMean perceived a supportive campus climate for LGBQ faculty members.

Josie ran up against heteronormative and gender stereotypes about the ideal worker at work as well. She made mention that she did not want her dean to consider “the domestic part” of her. Somehow, Josie feared that performing the mother and queer aspects of her identity, or her dean’s even knowing about those aspects, would prevent her from being treated as an academic. Indirectly, in her department, this indicates that queer mothers are not fully embraced as academic. This may also reflect some internalized oppression about Josie’s gender and sexual orientation.

Like Kate, Josie also experienced horizontal hostility from other members of the academic queer community. Josie said that, as a queer woman academic, having kids conveys that you are less committed to your scholarship, “that you’ve proven you’re not worthy or something, particularly among queer communities. Not only have you broken your vow of scholarship, but you’ve also sold out to the heteronormative.”
Moreover, they have done so, and succeeded, in spite of the pressure some of them experienced to validate themselves on a different level, beyond ‘just’ achieving tenure; some felt the pressure to be the “nicest, smartest” version of themselves to prove they are at least as good/worthy/smarter as their straight colleagues. This indicates that they met the requirements, but had to go above and beyond in order to counteract the heterosexist assumption that their queerness somehow made them lesser faculty members. In spite of being faced with assumed heterosexuality or organizational heteronormativity, participants resisted. The way participants have done sexuality and family in the academy has, in essence, resisted and challenged binary norms. This is how the participants in this study have queered notions of family and their faculty roles in the academy.

**Implications for Practice**

From this research, there are several implications for practice. Additionally, findings from this study have implications for partners of queer faculty mothers.

**Implications for Early-Career and Aspiring Queer Faculty Women**

As I previously noted, one of my goals in this study was to help inform early-career and aspiring queer faculty women about the ways in which family and professional roles can complement, rather than deter, from one another. From the findings of this study, there are two primary implications for early-career and aspiring queer faculty women.

**Consider the importance of institutional and departmental fit in the job search process.** Although participants in this study had varied experiences with regard to work climate, they did identify aspects of positive, supportive, and family-affirming work environments. During the job search and decision-making processes, queer faculty women should consider university policies when possible. Multiple participants in this study noted discussing queer
topics in their job talks, which seemed to be a sort of litmus test for support of queer research topics. Multiple participants perceived departmental and colleague support (or lack of support) of queer research directly as support (or lack of support) of their sexual orientation.

Additionally, participants identified supportive work climates in other ways, including departments with social justice as the focus of their departmental values and the student who took a participant aside and gave her information about queer communities in the area. Because all participants’ job searches had occurred prior to the Supreme Court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage, participants felt that supportive departments were signaled by administrators who talked about same-sex partner benefits during or shortly after the interview process and universities with human resource policies that extend benefits to same-sex partners. Applicants should look for clues to the department’s climate and, if able, determine the degree of fit accordingly.

**Seek individualized approaches to family-related needs.** In addition to traditional parental leave, participants in this study benefitted from personalized approaches to their family-related needs. If they are in positive, family-affirming work environments, queer faculty mothers should request modified leave (e.g., course releases, modified duties) if they believe it would benefit them.

**Implications for Administrators and Colleagues**

Another goal of this research was to educate administrators and colleagues about the experiences of queer faculty members who have been successful in simultaneously navigating academia and motherhood. The experiences of the women in this study demonstrate that family and professional roles can be mutually beneficial. There are several implications for administrators and colleagues.
**Employ an individualized approach.** As mentioned, participants in this study benefitted from personalized approaches to their family-related needs. Department chairs and administrators working with faculty parents should utilize an individualized approach with regard to policies and procedures, when possible. This would include avoiding formalized maternity leaves and tenure clock stops if the faculty member is interested in avoiding those and if the department decision-makers are able to extend informal alternatives. In this study, multiple participants enjoyed informal leaves (e.g., a semester off teaching, but maintaining all other faculty duties). This implication is not necessarily based in faculty members’ sexuality at all, as this individualized approach would likely benefit all faculty parents, not just queer faculty mothers. Fathers and other caregivers should also be encouraged to utilize parenting- and other family-related human resource policies and procedures. As Sallee (2012) asserted, “Traditional gender roles and the norms of the ideal worker discriminate against fathers who wish to be involved parents” (p. 799). The perpetuation of the gendered academy and the ideal worker is harmful to all, not just women. Should chairs and directors chose to provide individualized approaches to policies and procedures, they will need to do so without favoritism and with awareness of relevant collective-bargaining agreements.

**Support early-career queer faculty mothers.** Participants in this study noted several forms of colleague and administrative support of their parenting roles from which they benefitted in their early careers. First, administrators should be informed about the family-related human resource policies and procedures (e.g., leaves, tenure clock stop), as well as the alternatives (i.e., informal leaves), if they are available at their institutions. If administrators are informed of these policies and procedures before a faculty member discloses that they are going to become a parent, the conversation will be more beneficial and useful. Second, several participants talked
about departmental expectations for service being somewhat limited prior to tenure attainment; faculty members should be protected from service that exceeds tenure and promotion requirements. Third, administrators and colleagues can foster a family-affirming work environment by encouraging faculty members to be open about their family roles, including family members at departmental events, and discussing the importance of work-life harmony or balance.

**Encourage work-family balance and enrichment of queer faculty mothers.** Participants repeatedly noted how being mothers makes them better faculty members. They also recognized the benefits of connecting with other faculty parents. Participants appreciated the celebration of their families (via baby showers and other celebrations) and the incorporation of their families into departmental events. Particularly among those who worked in family-affirming departments, participants in this study benefitted from work-family enrichment resource generation and transfer.

As the message is still apparent (to women in this study and to women in other studies [e.g., Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012]) that family roles and faculty roles are irreconcilable, institutions must work to disrupt this notion. A strengths-based perspective on work-family enrichment offers one way to do so. This can be done by acknowledging faculty members’ family roles and incorporating family members when possible. Additionally, institutions should provide formalized opportunities for faculty parents to reflect on and discuss their experiences, which may further encourage work-family enrichment.

**Address institutional biases.** This study illuminates some of the normative expectations and beliefs about the incompatibility of motherhood and success in academia experienced by participants. For a majority of the women in this study, heteronormative constructs of
motherhood and success were present in the academy. Therefore, the penultimate implication of this study is to continue to challenge these sexist and heteronormative conceptions of family and academic success. People working in institutions of higher education must address the bias that participants in this study faced.

Diversity programs and policies should be offered around sexism and heterosexism. These programs should highlight that sexism and heterosexism are harmful to all who experience them, not simply the person being marginalized. Engagement in dialogues to further break down heteronormative binary concepts of gender, sexuality, and family would be useful in disrupting this bias. Additionally, as Acker (1990, 2006) implied, we must work to be aware of notions of the ideal faculty member and then to challenge and deconstruct them.

Additionally, diversity representation on committees must be addressed. Minoritized faculty members are tokenized in this service. Further, particularly in cases where faculty diversity is so rare that one or two faculty members are being asked to serve on multiple department and university committees, they are asked to serve even more than their majority peers. We must not rely on people from marginalized groups to lead the charge of institutional change. Allies should be doing this work, informed by the desires of people from those groups.

In this study, multiple participants spoke with their parenting students about how to work with a baby or child at home. One participant also noted the influence of a student’s advice about the queer community in her decision to accept her faculty position as well as in deciding where to live in her move to the new city. This network and knowledge (i.e., tips and tricks of the trade) is needed and priceless for new faculty mothers and parenting students as well as queer faculty and students. For students, include GLBTQ parenting issues in parenting student programs on campus. For faculty members, offer family- and identity-related information to all
prospective faculty members, offering this information to all prospects will ensure that search committees avoid illegal, discriminatory treatment of one or some applicants. For example, hiring committees could automatically provide brochures about various faculty topics upon a prospective faculty member’s completed application and include information on identity-related (e.g., support and networks for various and intersectional identities) and faculty parent issues (e.g., day care facilities nearby, faculty parent support group information). This will effectively offer faculty parents a sort of social capital within faculty communities by formalizing the network of faculty members with various parenting experiences; in addition, it will normalize the experience of faculty parents. This further relates to Acker’s (1990, 2006) assertion that awareness and deconstruction of the ideal worker will challenge its perpetuation.

**Implications for Partners of Queer Faculty Parents**

Undoubtedly, the recommendations from this study focus on changes that can be implemented within institutions of higher education. However, findings of this study present opportunities for partners of queer faculty mothers.

Overwhelmingly, participants in this study appreciated the support of their families. Interest and involvement in participants’ work, support in helping participants complete their work (e.g., “tag-team” parenting and/or partners’ taking care of children at times during nights or weekends), and joint commitments to parenting priorities were noted forms of support for queer mothers in this study. Partners of queer faculty mothers can be supportive in these ways.

**Implications for Research**

In this study, I examined the experiences of queer faculty mothers within the theoretical framework of work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Each participant in this study was a tenured faculty member at a doctoral university with either higher or highest
research activity according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. These women worked at various institutions around the United States, primarily in the Eastern half of the country with five participants in the Midwest, one in the Northeast, and one in the South. All of the participants were partnered and identified as White. Through this study, we can gain insight into the experiences of these seven women’s experiences with work climate, perspectives of success, sources of support, and work-family enrichment resources. The findings from the present study may be transferable to similar queer faculty mothers (i.e., coupled, White, at research-focused institutions) in academia and queer mothers in similar jobs.

As the present study was limited to the women who met the aforementioned criteria and whose additional demographic information is noted above, there are numerous opportunities for additional research. First, all of the people who responded to my call for participants were White; future research should actively seek out queer women of color. Their experiences are important and likely further complicated by the intersections of their identities. We must be more inclusive of people of color in research like this.

As mentioned previously, queer faculty mothers who felt the challenges of being both a faculty member and a parent outweighed the synergy of the two roles may have left their faculty positions, and therefore would not have been participants in this study. Their voices are missing; future research should include the perspectives of queer mothers who left academia to determine what we can learn from their experiences to improve the climate for others like them.

Further research should examine whether there is an institutional or disciplinary effect on queer faculty mothers’ experiences as that comparison was beyond the scope of this study but may be valuable information. Future research additionally should include the perspectives of queer faculty mothers who are not partnered, who have multiple partners, who have not yet
attained tenure and promotion, and/or who have attained full professorships. Such research would expand the present study and could offer insight into the generalizability of findings to other queer faculty mothers.

Furthermore, future research should be more inclusive in considering the experiences of trans* faculty parents; gay, bisexual, and queer faculty fathers; LGBTQ administrative parents; and LGBTQ parenting students. Alternatively, this study (as well as the other possible research studies noted herein) could be expanded to include a work-family conflict theoretical framework in order to ensure that potential researcher or theoretical bias is taken into account. This research could additionally grow to include the experiences of LGBTQ faculty members who have other caregiving roles (e.g., caring for parents, caring for partners, caring for others).

In the quantitative realm, future research could expand to be inclusive of a much larger population of LGBTQ faculty parents to investigate their achievement of tenure and promotion as well as comparing wages among and between institutional types, disciplinary areas, and years at the university. Additionally, quantitative research could complement the present study by exploring LGBTQ faculty members’ perceptions of success, work-family enrichment, and differential treatment on a much larger scale.

In light of the work-family enrichment theoretical framework (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), further research could delve deeper into the paths for work-family enrichment by identifying the instrumental or affective pathways for resource transferal. Additionally, some sort of measurement for role and resource salience might be beneficial in further exploring this model. A more robust and comparative study on the incidence of work-family conflict and work-family enrichment among LGBTQ parents in academia would be interesting.
From the findings of this study, several questions come to mind. All participants in this study reported that they participated in a great deal of service and several participants directly identified that they participated in more service than their peers did. Why is that? Women and faculty of color are assigned more service than their male and White peers (Baez, 2000; Kelly & McCann, 2014; Porter, 2007). Do queer faculty mothers also do more mentoring and service than those in privilege? If so, how does that affect their ability to meet other work role requirements?

In this study, the focal aspect of support was from whom or where participants perceived support. Future research should explore this topic further by focusing on for what issues queer faculty mothers most needed support and, more directly, what forms of support were most helpful to them.

Additionally, although the topic of success was a focus of one of the sub-questions of this study, the interview questions and design of the study did not contribute to an in-depth understanding of participants’ perceptions of success. Future research that is more intentionally informed by extant research on success would better accomplish that understanding.

Participants described several instances of internalized (e.g., Josie’s desire to keep her dean from considering the “domestic part” [queer and mother] of her) and horizontal (e.g., “broken vow of scholarship” and “undermining the work of a whole generation of feminists by being a mother”) oppression. Future research should delve deeper into the pervasiveness and effects of these forms of oppression on queer faculty mothers.

Lastly, having discovered the benefits of work-family enrichment for queer faculty mothers, I wonder if there are ways that professional development opportunities may strengthen the resource development and transfer of queer (and other) faculty parents. Would offering
education to interested faculty members about the potential and possibility for work-family enrichment help faculty parents? This bears further research.

**Conclusion**

What does it say about queer and feminist academia that having a family is considered a broken vow? The women in this study have all met the requirements for tenure and promotion *after* having children; clearly having a family has not prevented their success in academia. There is yet more work to be done to challenge this perceived work-family incompatibility for queer faculty mothers in academia.

However, the findings of this study support the framework of work-family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and offer a strengths-based perspective on the lives of queer faculty mothers. I hope that the findings of this study might inform early-career and aspiring queer faculty mothers, as well as college and university administrators, about the possibilities for success as well as some of the key ingredients in supporting queer faculty mothers through early careers, tenure and promotion, and other facets of faculty life.

Moreover, I hope that in sharing this research, these women and their successes can be acknowledged, in addition to others’ learning from some of their challenges. It is not without difficulty, but tenured queer women associate and full professors *can* have families.
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APPENDIX A: HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

DATE: August 25, 2015
TO: Katherine Stylges
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [787090-2] LBQ Faculty Mothers
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: August 20, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: August 3, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 15 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on August 3, 2016. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.
Hello,

I am a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University. My dissertation will focus on my interest in learning more about the ways in which lesbian- and/or queer-identifying (e.g., queer, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, etc.) faculty mothers make meaning of their experiences with motherhood and academia. I hope to interview 8-10 women who have successfully achieved tenure and promotion to associate or full professorships and who also had children (biological or adopted) prior to attaining tenure. I am particularly interested in how participants define success, believe motherhood has influenced faculty-life, and navigate cultural and occupational gendered expectations. Participation is voluntary and confidential.

Little is known about the challenges and benefits facing lesbian- and/or queer-identifying faculty mothers, and I hope that this study will inform future research and policy development, and may positively transform campus climate.

Being in the study would entail participating in an interview that will last 60-90 minutes, reviewing the transcript of our interview, reviewing the findings of the study, and (if you so choose) a group member-check processing session; in all, approximately 6 hours of your time. Your involvement in the study (from the time of the interview to your reviewing the study’s conclusions) will span about one and one-half years.

If you are interested in participating, or in knowing more about the study, please contact me, Katie Stygles, at kstygle@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Ellen Broido, at 419-372-9391 or by email at ebroido@bgsu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,
Katie Stygles
Doctoral Student, Higher Education Administration
Higher Education and Student Affairs
Bowling Green State University
330 Education Building
Bowling Green, Ohio, 43403
kstygle@bgsu.edu

***Please note that email is not confidential. If you respond to my email, it is possible that someone will gain knowledge of your interest in this study.
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic Information
The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn some general information about you. Your responses are confidential and you may choose not to answer these questions.

1. What is your academic discipline/area of expertise?
2. What is your current rank? When did you achieve promotion (to associate? to full?) When did you receive tenure?
3. How many children do you have?
4. How old are your children?
5. How do you identify your sexual orientation?
6. How do you identify your gender? What are your pronouns?
7. What is your relationship status?
8. How old are you?
9. What’s your race/ethnicity?

Interview Questions
1. How does your sexual identity impact your experience as a faculty parent?
   a. Have there been different impacts over time?
   b. Are there ways that your sexual identity has supported or detracted from your experience as a faculty parent?
2. How does being a mother impact your experience as a lesbian and/or queer faculty member?
   a. Have there been different impacts over time?
   b. Are there ways that your being a mother has supported or detracted from your experience as a lesbian and/or queer faculty member?
3. How does being a faculty member impact your experience as a lesbian and/or queer mother?
   a. Have there been different impacts over time?
   b. Are there ways that your being a faculty member has supported or detracted from your experience as a lesbian and/or queer parent?
4. Has being a lesbian and/or queer mother impacted your tenure and promotion process? If so, how?
5. Have you used any of the work-life balance related policies at your university? (Probes: tenure clock stop, FMLA, extended leave?)
6. What kinds of messages have you received about your identity as a lesbian/queer faculty mother? (Probes: from department chair or other “supervisors”, other faculty members, students, partner, family, etc.?)
7. Have you ever been treated differently than your peers who are not mothers? Lesbians/queer? (Probes: specific duties, salary, promotion, flexibility, behavioral expectations, support for teaching/research/service)
   a. If so, tell me about that.
   b. What’s helped you to deal with any differential treatment (probe for support in peers, supervisors, organizations, EEOC, HR, etc.)?
8. From where or from whom do you feel supported as a lesbian/queer faculty mother? (Probes: supervisors, partner, child[ren], students, peers, early career faculty?)
a. Has that support/lack of support changed over time?
9. Are there advantages to being a mother in your position as a faculty member? Are there advantages to being a lesbian/queer in your position as a faculty member?
10. Are there advantages to being a faculty member in your role as a mother? Are there advantages to being a lesbian/queer in your role as a mother?
11. What should I have asked you that I haven’t and that you would like to share?
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent for Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Faculty Mothers Study
Bowling Green State University

Title of Project: A Narrative Study of Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Faculty Mothers: Experiences of Queerness, Motherhood, & Academia

Person in Charge: Katherine (Katie) Styles
Doctoral Student, Higher Education and Student Affairs
330 Education Building
Bowling Green, OH 43403
419-372-1547
kstyles@bgsu.edu

1. This section provides an explanation of the study in which you will be participating:

Introduction: My name is Katie Styles and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program at Bowling Green State University. My advisor is Dr. Ellen Broido, associate professor in the department of Higher Education and Student Affairs. I am interested in the experiences of women faculty members, specifically lesbian-, bisexual, or queer-identifying (LBJ) women who are single or in same sex relationships and who identified as LBJ prior to earning tenure at a doctoral-granting institution and who are the residential parent for child(ren) under the age of 18. You are being asked to participate in this study because you identify as an LBJ faculty mother in a tenured, associate or full professor position.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of women faculty members who are parents and identify as LBJ. By conducting this research, I want to gain a better understanding of how LBJ faculty mothers define success, believe motherhood has influenced faculty-life and vice versa, and how LBJ faculty mothers experience heteronormativity within the academy. I hope this information provides insight into ways we might inform university administrators about the effects of these multiple identities.

While there are no direct benefits for your participation in this study, there may be benefits to you from discussing your experiences as an LBJ faculty mother, especially with other women who hold similar identities. For example, you may gain greater insight into how being a parent has changed you in this process, and you may better understand your identity as a faculty member, LBJ woman, and mother. You may experience relief from getting these stories “off your chest.” In addition, your experiences may be inspirational for aspiring faculty members and to other faculty members who have or intend to have children. Finally, higher education professionals can learn from your stories, which could lead to more supportive work environments for LBJ faculty mothers.

Procedure: If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to participate in two face-to-face (in person, via Skype, or over the phone) interviews with me—each interview will be approximately 90-120 minutes. These sessions will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim as quickly as possible. I will send you a copy of the transcripts of the interviews [by your preferred contact method—
email or U.S. Postal Service mail), and will ask you to review the transcripts and return them to me within two weeks (or as soon as possible if you need more than two weeks). Then I will ask you to either talk with or email me about any further thoughts you have upon reading your transcript. I will also ask you to review preliminary research findings and to respond to me with your impressions of them. Your involvement in the study (from the time of the interview to your reviewing the study's conclusions) will span about 1 ½ years.

Your participation in this study will take approximately six hours, including the two interviews, the follow-up discussions of emails, and commenting on the transcripts, preliminary findings, and final narrative.

The transcripts of your interviews, as well as those of approximately 7-9 others, will be used to develop a better understanding of how LBQ mothers, as faculty members, experience and make meaning of their roles and the tenure and promotion processes, and if appropriate, to recommend changes that would address these issues in the context of higher education. I also plan to present and publish findings of this study.

2. **This section provides an explanation of your rights as a research participant:**

**Voluntary nature:** Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may choose not to answer questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University.

**Confidentiality/Identity Protection:** I will make every effort to ensure that your participation in this research is confidential, although I cannot absolutely guarantee that. Before we start the study, I will ask you to choose a pseudonym. I will have one electronic spreadsheet that matches your real name and contact information (phone number and/or email address) with your pseudonym, but no other information will be in that file, and it will remain secure in my password-protected dropbox account and backed up on a flashdrive in my locked office, stored separately from all other study materials. Your pseudonym is the only identifier that will be on the electronic recording of the interview, any notes I make during our discussion, and on the interview transcripts. When I compile the results of the study, I will change the name of any personally identifying information (including the names of people you mention and the names of universities). My advisor, Ellen Broido, and I are the only people who will be able to match the pseudonym to your real name in any presentation or published material. All interview electronic files will remain securely in either my possession on a password-protected computer, or that of my advisor. All interview recordings will be erased at the completion of this study.

**Risks:** This study involves minimal risk, that is, no risk to your physical or mental health beyond those encountered in the normal course of everyday life. LBQ women and faculty mothers sometimes deal with issues of harassment or other experiences of institutional or social discrimination. During the course of the interview you may decide to disclose information about these topics, in ways you might share with colleagues or friends. Such disclosure might result in emotional distress. Even in research studies using a pseudonym, there is a possibility that the speaker could be identified. If you are concerned about any questions you may choose to not answer them; refusing to answer any questions will not result in negative consequences. You also will have the chance to review the transcript of your interview and remove or change information you do not wish me to use. If the questions upset you, I will refer you to places that can help you address your emotions. Specifically, I will refer you to the Office of Equity and Diversity at your university of employment, the counseling center at your university of employment, or an off-campus mental health organization in your area.
Because I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of email, I will email you only if you give me permission to do so; you will indicate your permission by giving me your email address at the same time you choose a pseudonym for the study.

**Contact information:** I will explain to you the purpose of this research and your role in it, and will answer any questions you have about the research procedures. You may contact me, the study director, at kstyle@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Ellen Broido, at ebroido@bgsu.edu or (419) 372-9391. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hrsb@bgsu.edu, if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study, or if you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant.

Thank you for your time!

3. **This section is to indicate that you give your verbal informed consent to participate in the research:**

**Participant:** I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any point in the research process. By participating in the interview, I am indicating my consent to participate in this research study and acknowledging that I am 18 years of age or older.