‘Here We Are’: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Pregnant Graduate Students within Neoliberal Universities

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

Katlyn M. Merkle
August 2016
© 2016 Katlyn M. Merkle. All Rights Reserved.
This thesis titled
‘Here We Are’: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Pregnant Graduate Students within
Neoliberal Universities

by
KATLYN M. MERKLE

has been approved for
the Department of Geography
and the College of Arts and Sciences by

Risa Whitson
Associate Professor of Geography

Robert Frank
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
ABSTRACT

MERKLE, KATLYN M., M.A., August 2016, Geography

‘Here We Are’: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Pregnant Graduate Students within Neoliberal Universities

Director of Thesis: Risa Whitson

This research aims to improve how feminist geographers theorize people’s embodied connections to spaces and places through analyzing what pregnancy is like while attending graduate school. This study explores the interconnectedness between how pregnancy is experienced and embodied by graduate students at neoliberal universities within the United States along with how pregnancy disrupts established bodily boundaries for graduate students at universities. This research on maternities unpacks how pregnancy, is embedded in a set of social conditions that can be manipulated based on the gender politics that are culturally produced and maintained within everyday geographies. By learning more about the lived experiences of pregnant graduate students, this research hopes to create or spur conversations that could lead to more supportive environments for pregnant students within neoliberal universities.
DEDICATION

To all pregnant bodies that learn and work at our universities.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank the research participants. It is because of their willingness to share their experiences that this research exists. Second, I would like to thank my advisor and feminist comrade, Dr. Risa Whitson, for being my ‘north star’ and advocate throughout this research process. Third, I would like to thank my committee members: Dr. Patty Stokes, Dr. Enda Wangui, and Dr. Brad Jokisch. Thank you for your hard questions, your patience, advice, and dedication to advancing feminist and geographic thought. Thank you all for believing in this research.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Geography</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodily Boundaries</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Neoliberal University</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Employing Qualitative Research Methods Within a Critical Feminist Paradigm</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Approach</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Theory Paradigm in Geography</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing Feminist Research</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Method Design</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Results and Analysis</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands on Graduate Students within Neoliberal Universities</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Institutional Support</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating Pregnancy Through Support Structures</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodies Out of Place and On Display</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Conclusions</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Call to Participate in Research</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Graduate Students Who Were Pregnant While in Graduate School</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Interview Protocol For University Administrators</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1</th>
<th>Academic level and discipline</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In my journal [to my daughter] I wrote how, “This is your first day of school. Like you’re really coming to school with me and we are going to stand in front and preform in front of people.” She was very active at that stage and I felt her a lot. So while I was presenting I felt her and I know its visible. I don't know if they could see it, but I imagine an arm, a leg sticking out. But it was so on two levels. Like one, being aware. Like, can they see this happening? And then just knowing its happening, trying to stay focused while this child is moving inside of me. It’s like the mind/ body thing. This dynamic is so funky because I was trying too hard to stay focused... That was the most explosive moment of being pregnant body in grad school. I was totally on display. I was like, “Here we are!” –Helen, Ph.D. in Women’s Studies

In the excerpt above, Helen who now has a Ph.D. in Women’s Studies, was describing what it was like presenting her dissertation proposal while eight months pregnant with her first child. Helen’s story beautifully captures what it is like being a pregnant student during a defining moment in her graduate career. Helen’s proposal defense and her pregnancy are not mutually exclusive. They are connected through time and place. Experiencing a pregnancy influenced Helen’s graduate school experience, and being a graduate student affected Helen’s experience of pregnancy. Examining and exploring these two identities and forms of embodiment is fascinating because such exploration brings to the surface hidden notions of bodies, gender, power, place, and subjectivity. All these components make pregnant graduate students excellent subjects to research from a feminist geographic perspective.

No single characteristic exists which identifies feminist research or even writing (Grosz, 1995). Broadly speaking, feminist work focuses on illuminating, examining and challenging the hegemonic sexual and gender structures that exist within society when the determining factor for establishing difference, and the privileges that surround such
difference, are based upon sexual and gender variances (McDowell, 1999 and Grosz, 1995). In regards to feminist scholarship and text, Grosz (1995, pg. 23) offers this explanation regarding what makes a text feminist:

A feminist text must not only be critical of or a challenge to the patriarchal norms governing it; it must also help in whatever way, to facilitate the production of new and perhaps unknown, unthought discursive spaces – new styles, modes of analysis and argument, new genres and forms that contest the limits and constraints currently at work in the regulation of textual production and reception.

While Grosz (1995) only mentions text, the spirit of her remarks, I believe, transfers to creating feminist research. This connection of feminist scholarship to political struggles, recognition and justice is what makes feminist scholarship appropriate for this research.

While the foundation for feminist scholarship is examining and challenging how the gender binary is culturally produced and maintained, “feminist” scholarship has expanded its reach within the past two decades (Longhurst, 2008). Across the academic disciplines, feminist scholarship has stretched from illuminating and examining the political and social inequalities that exist between men and women, to now exploring the complexities associated with language, symbolism, representations, space, and how meanings of gender and sex correlate to social constructions that surround notions of gender identity on living bodies (McDowell, 1999 and Grosz, 1995).

The purpose of this research is to continue advancing feminist research and scholarship by exploring and analyzing how experiences of gender and forms of embodiment are connected to place. The material aspects of bodies are important within place because our experiences and how we think about our materiality are “interconnected and mutually constituted” to place (McDowell, 1999, pg.7). This
research examines how bodies are connected to space by studying the lived experiences of pregnant full-time graduate students at neoliberal universities in the United States. In particular, I seek to address the following 3 research questions:

1.) Do university spaces affect the lived experiences of graduate students who are pregnant?

2.) Does the existence of pregnant graduate students within university spaces affect the meaning of those spaces?

3.) Does the existence of pregnant graduate students within university spaces disrupt bodily boundaries within those spaces?

These questions provide us a window to view the politics behind how maternal bodies and identities are culturally produced in different places and scales along with how power and subjectivity are produced and maintained in various places and scales. The “place” is, in this case, American neoliberal universities.

Neoliberalism is similar to feminism, in that no single characteristic exists which serves as a terminal identifier. How neoliberalism takes shape and operates is complex and varies across spatial scales. However, neoliberal ideology, the theory behind neoliberalism is easier to communicate. Brenner and Theodore (2002, 350) state, “the linchpin of neoliberal ideology is the belief that open, competitive and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development.” While neoliberalism is varied it does affect most daily lives, even lives within universities.
I selected American neoliberal universities as the site to study bodily boundaries because universities are critical social institutions that do not exist or function outside of larger social structures. Neoliberalism and neoliberal politics have affected and changed the way universities work. The university, as an institution, adopted and continues to embrace neoliberal politics (Freeman, 2000). However, how these neoliberal politics develop, function and effect lives within universities is all about the context that surrounds an individual university. Examples that affect context within universities are: who holds leadership positions, do unions exist, enrollment history, endowments, etc. As a result of the complexity and variedness that surrounds neoliberalism within universities, this research adopts the concept developed by Brenner and Theodore (2002) called “actually existing neoliberalism.” Brenner and Theodore (2002, pg. 351) state:

In contrast to neoliberal ideology, in which market forces are assumed to operate accordingly to immutable laws no matter where they are “unleashed,” we emphasize the contextual embeddedness of neoliberal restructuring projects insofar as they have been produced within national, regional, and local contexts, defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices and poetical struggles.

Adopting an “actually existing neoliberalism” framework for this research is imperative because while neoliberalism is a major component of this study, it is not the main issue at hand. Neoliberal politics and policies within universities further complicate and regulate bodies in an already complex and controlled place.

Furthermore, American neoliberal universities are like other large-scale institutions in that hierarchies and discrimination exist. Freeman (2000, pg. 246) offers this explanation as to how neoliberal universities connect to and illuminate relationships of power that also exists within other institutions and contexts:
The ways in which one experiences the neoliberal transformations occurring within North American universities and importantly, considerations of who is absent from these universities are inseparable from culture, politics and economics at all scales, reminding us that universities are anything but disconnected from larger society and geographies in which they operate.

Freeman’s (2000) quote advocates for the examination of bodies within neoliberal universities. It is important that we, as academic geographers, turn our well-trained and critical eyes to our daily geographies at our universities and analyze the power structures embedded within academia. If we want to make universities and knowledge production more inclusive then we as academics need to look at what type of bodies are visible and invisible in academia along with how bodies are controlled in the university context.

For many graduate students, life while attending graduate school is not easy. As explained by Freeman (2000, pg. 250), “what is distinctive about the experience of many graduate students: it is marked by an astounding degree of unpredictability, uncertainty, and insecurity on a variety of levels.” As a graduate student, I relate to Freeman’s (2000) comment. I have personally experienced, and viewed others experience, severe personal and professional difficulties while in graduate school. Specifically, throughout my time as a graduate student I have dealt with being ill and the illnesses of close family members, I have struggled to buy groceries and pay rent, and I have experienced prolonged feelings of isolation, anxiety and guilt. Particularly, I feel guilty that I am not producing enough quality work both as a graduate student and university employee.

Graduate students at most higher education institutions undertake a variety of functions such as research assistants, teaching assistants, and graduate assistants while managing a full-time graduate course load (Freeman, 2000). I struggled while I
attempted to maintain a graduate assistantship, one that required far more time than its
designated twenty hours per week, with twelve course credit hours. Most of the time I felt
more like a university employee than a graduate student. Despite such a demanding work
requirement, throughout my entire graduate experience I have lived below the poverty
line. As a result, I receive government aid in the forms of Medicare and food assistance. I
have experienced feelings of guilt and embarrassment because I rely on such forms of
government aid. Most graduate students in the United States are not able to make a living
wage and have little to no job security (Freeman, 2000). When a living wage is denied, it
can affect how graduate students can care for themselves. While my experiences and
struggles are not unique to what graduate students experience they are unique in how I
embodied such experiences based on my positionality and subjectivity.

Universities, as institutions, also provide great sites to study how power functions
by disciplining and regulating bodies. Caputo and Yount (1993, pg. 4) provide this
explanation of power:

Power is a thin, inescapable film that covers all human interactions, whether
inside institutions or out. Institutional structures are saturated with sexual
relations, economic relations, social relation, etc., and are always established of
these power relations… institutions are the means that power uses.

Building on the work of poststructuralists, feminist geographers bring a vibrant
perspective to how we can understand the spatial power dynamics that people experience
within university spaces and how these social power dynamics reflect experiences in
other everyday geographies (see, for example, Freeman, 2000; and Mountz et al., 2015).

Furthermore, a gender imbalance exists among professionals within universities.
The percentage of women receiving doctorates in the United States rose from 12 percent
in 1966 to 49 percent in 2000. Today it stands at 51 percent (Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden, 2013). Such an increase in degrees granted is a phenomenal accomplishment. However, the lack of female representation within neoliberal universities continues to exist. Furthermore, women who hold top positions are far less likely to be married or have children than their male counterparts (Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden, 2013). In contrast, more women than men exist in lower ranking positions, such as part-time faculty and the women in these posts are just as likely as their male counterparts to be parents (Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden, 2013). This demography, while superficial, can lead us to argue that mothers are more likely to work in the second tier of academia or even leave higher education altogether. While this research is not analyzing what causes women to leave academia or work in second tier positions, these are important demographics that highlight current gender imbalances and power structures within universities. Furthermore, such demography illustrates what types of bodies are most often seen on university campuses.

Following this introduction, Chapter Two reviews the most relevant academic literature within which this research is positioned. Specifically, the literature presented in this chapter presents an overview of feminist geography and its work on bodies and bodily boundaries and maternities. Lastly, Chapter Two considers how and why geographers are researching and critiquing neoliberal universities and examining how neoliberal universities discipline bodies.

Chapter Three provides a detailed account of the research methods used to collect data. In this chapter, I describe and advocate for the feminist methodological approach I
used to conduct this study. I explicitly explain why I chose to carry out my fieldwork using a qualitative research design and a critical feminist paradigm. This chapter concludes by providing an overview of how the collected data was analyzed.

Chapters Four and Five contain research findings and the conclusions of these findings. I use the interviews I conducted, both from graduate students who experienced a pregnancy while in graduate school and with working professionals, to illustrate how the perceptions, anxieties and an overall lack of institutional support which surrounds the embodied experiences of pregnant graduate students is influenced by and correlates to the gendering of universities as places and the gender power relations that exist within universities.

By applying a critical feminist geography framework to exploring how pregnant graduate students experience the spaces and places that make up neoliberal universities, this research illuminates how bodily boundaries and embodied identities correlate with the production and maintenance of power and subjectivity within the places and spaces that surround everyday geographies. This research also publicizes the multiple truths that exist regarding what it means to be a pregnant body while in graduate school at a neoliberal university. Furthermore, this research creates what Rossman and Rallis (2003) describe as ‘concrete universals.’ In other words, I do not universalize that the lived experiences detailed in this research as the experiences all pregnant bodies experience within neoliberal universities. However, I do hope this level of analysis can apply to other feminist research and social theories that deal with how non-hegemonic bodies experience certain places and scales (Rossman and Rallis, 2003).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Materiality, which includes all the elements of a body, the blood, muscles, and flesh, can act both as a reducible signifier and as a site of signification (Butler, 1993). Historically speaking, geographers have used the materiality of bodies as signifiers and for demographic purposes, but for the past two decades geographers have begun to look at how materiality connects experience to meaning. Specifically, human and social geographers now view the body as a site where political struggle and social controversy is situated (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Within the context of feminist geography, the body is defined as a material site where personal identities are built (see Binnie, Longhurst, and Peace, 2001). Feminist geographers also extend this perspective by connecting gendered subjectivity to spatiality (Longhurst, 2008). Specifically, feminist geographers illustrate that the views and societal treatment of bodies that identify as female impact how women, as a gendered group, can negotiate fair and just treatment within the spaces and places that make up their everyday existences (Johnson, 2014). The ways communities view and subsequently treat the bodies of women matter because both contribute to the production and reproduction of interpersonal and institutional hegemonic power dynamics (Butler, 1990).

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how subjectivity and experiences that surround the embodiment of pregnancy connect to spatiality. I do this by first focusing on the theoretical foundation that makes up feminist geography and how space is gendered. Second, I present feminist literature and theory that illuminates the production of bodily boundaries and maternal subjectivity, subject formation, and how embodied experiences
of pregnancy and motherhood connect to place and the gendered politics that surround place. Third, I attach my research to current geographic and feminist literature that critiques the power dynamics within neoliberal universities. These critiques specifically focus on how the university, as an institution, affects certain types bodies and embodied experiences. Fourth, I conclude this chapter with literature that concentrates on the complicated and demanding lives of graduate students. Together, all these components show how and why geographers look at bodies and why the pregnant body in the places that make up neoliberal universities deserve academic recognition and examination.

Feminist Geography

It is important to note that feminist geography, while a sub-field, is extremely varied. As previously stated in my introduction, no one version of feminist scholarship exists (Grosz, 1995). The same logic is also relevant within feminist geography. Feminist geographers can and do align with different theoretical orientations (Johnson, 2000). Such theories and alignments can connect to postmodernism, postcolonialism, liberalism, criticalism, radicalism and socialism. However theoretically varied, feminist geographers mainly focus on how gender and sexuality intersect with place and space (McDowell, 1999). Feminist geographers examine the social and political inequalities that exist within the gender binary, and analyze how concepts and contexts of gender relate to space, place and social power (Johnson, 2000; Longhurst, 2008; McDowell, 1999).

Since the emergence of feminist geography in the 1970s, feminist geographers have conventionally employed a dualist foundation that differentiates between sex and gender (McDowell, 1999). This perspective argues that biological sex differences present
themselves at birth, but that gender is a social construct. McDowell (1999) speaks about how Simone de Beauvoir’s distinction between sex and gender profoundly influenced such constructionist feminist scholarship. De Beauvoir’s (2011, pg. 283) famous statement in *The Second Sex*: “one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman” cements this constructionist framework and perspective in connection to gender and how gender identities are created. In *Gender Trouble*, Feminist theorist Judith Butler (1990) advances gender theorization by arguing that gender is something we do. Specifically, she argues that gender is performative. Furthermore, according to Butler (1990), bodies do these gender performances on a regular everyday basis. Such repeated individual performances of gender and sexual behaviors establish what is then considered to be collective normative regulatory practices. Butler (1993, pg. 187) argues that these gender identity practices serve as “a specific modality of power as discourse.” Butler’s theory on gender performativity and how gender performances connect to social and biopower is relevant to feminist geographers because it attaches the formation and sustained performance of one's gender identity to established social power dynamics that surround the socially constructed gender binary.

Feminist geographers have expanded this feminist scholarship by arguing that gender as a symbolic social construction, performance, and a social relationship connects to place and representations of place (McDowell, 1999). For geographers, places are defined by social-spatial practices, which mean their boundaries are fluid and uncertain (McDowell, 1999). McDowell (1999, pg. 4) offers this definition of place:

Places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who
belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the locations and/or site of experience.

Johnston and Longhurst (2010, pg. 2) take this relationship a step further by adding that sexuality and sex are also intimately linked to space and place. They claim, “whether it is a bar, casino, or home sexual politics permeate the space. There are no spaces that sit outside sexual politics. Sex and space cannot be decoupled.” These feminist geographers simultaneously illuminate the complexities that surround the embodiment of gender while making the case that space, place, gender, and sexuality are all mutually constituted and contribute to power relations within our society (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010).

Broadly speaking, feminist geographers argue that because the gender binary is deeply embedded within our society, it contributes to how spaces and places are produced and represented. Therefore, it creates and distinguishes what is considered a masculine place from a feminine place (McDowell, 1999). Domosh and Seagar (2000, pg. 34) provide an excellent example of how space, gender, and identity are all interconnected in their book *Putting Women in Place*:

> From the bourgeois townhomes of the West End of London to the 1920’s model kitchens to the suburban houses of the postwar era, that form of housing has been shaped by and in turn helped to shape changing definitions of femininity… these are sites of living that are not simply backdrops of the enactment of gender roles. Instead, these places both create and reflect cultural notions of femininity and masculinity.

McDowell (1999, pg. 7) takes this dualistic relationship a step further by stating:

> In defining gender and in the preceding discussion of the changing definition and understanding of place, it is clear that social practices, including the wide range of social interactions at a variety of sites and places – at work, for example, at home, in the pub or the gym – and ways of thinking about and representing place/gender are interconnected and mutually constituted.
These examinations of place illustrate how gender representations and interactions within places influence the cultural productions of gender and gender performances. All of these relationships are, in turn, developed and maintained by the modality of power (Butler, 1993).

Power and subjectivity are connected to identities and spatiality (McDowell, 1999). Therefore, representations of place also contribute to how power and subjectivity are developed and maintained (McDowell, 1999). McDowell (1999, pg. 4) provides a strong distinction that highlights the relationship between power and place:

Places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the experience.

Gender, along with power and subjectivity, is therefore culturally produced and maintained through everyday interactions within everyday spaces and places. These components influence who has power where and who lacks power, and where. Feminist geographers illuminate these power creations and power relations that people experience in their everyday lives by focusing on everyday relationships in everyday places. Looking at how everyday places are gendered helps illuminate and deconstruct the politics that lie behind gender relations (Domosh and Seager, 2001).

Feminist scholars continue to employ these theoretical distinctions between sex and gender because such theories challenge hegemonic discourse which claims that gender identity and sexuality are biologically predetermined and natural (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). As a result of questioning what is considered to be essential and natural, the power structures that support or even depend on such notions of essentialism
can also be directly examined and challenged as a result of this deconstruction of gender identity and sexually. Deconstructing such modes of identity that are considered natural directly challenges discourses that claims certain forms of patriarchal power and power structures are inherent. Yet while these methods of deconstruction are productive in challenging hegemonic patriarchal power structures, they lack an examination and appreciation of our human corporality (Grosz, 1995). Looking at subjectivity requires analysis of the body.

Within feminist theory and scholarship, analyzing bodies and corporality, mainly bodies that identify as women, has been excluded (until recently) because such examinations can be viewed as reductive and even as promoting theories which essentialize womanhood and the feminine (Grosz, 1995). Feminist theorist, Elizabeth Grosz (1995, pg. 31) explains why:

There is still a strong reluctance to conceptualize the female body as playing a significant role in women’s oppression. Few concepts have been as maligned or condemned within feminists theory, with monotonous charges of biologism, essentialism, ahistoricism, and naturalism continuing to haunt those who use it.

However, beginning in the 1980’s feminists, along with cultural theorists, began to conceptualize materiality differently. Analyzing the body, specifically bodies that identify as women, is gaining traction within feminist scholarship (see, for example, Azzarito and Solmon, 2006; Butler, 1993; Caudwell, 2003; Grosz, 1995; and Longhurst, 2008). A major reason for this increased attention is that the body continues to remain closely associated with the feminine and the mind, or reason, is linked to the masculine (Grosz, 1995).
This mind/body binary directly influences gender subjectivity and gender power structures and relations. The importance of deconstructing and challenging this binary materiality is now recognized amongst many feminist scholars (see, for example, Azzarito and Solmon, 2006; Butler, 1993; Caudwell, 2003; Grosz, 1995; Longhurst, 2008; and Young, 2005). Moreover, since materiality was left out of feminist academic scholarship, so were forms of embodiment (Grosz, 1995). Grosz (1995, pg. 32) offers this explanation for why bodies and forms of embodiment are important and why they have a place within feminist scholarship:

If the notion of a radical and irreducible difference is to be understood with respect to subjectivity, the specific modes of corporeality of bodies in their variety must be acknowledged. These differences must in some way be inscribed on and experienced by and through the body. Sexual differences, like those of class and race, are bodily differences, but in order to acknowledge their fundamentally social and cultural ‘nature,’ the body much be reconceived not in opposition to the culture but as its preeminent object.

Grosz’s notion that a body is a preeminent object draws off of Foucault’s theory, which regards “the body as a surface on which social law, morality and values are inscribed” (Grosz 1995, pg. 33).

The strong concentration on the social constructionist and performativity framework of gender identity resulted in excluding the body within feminist geography scholarship until the mid-1990s, when, like other feminist theorists, feminist geographers also began to critique the exclusion of the body from geographic thought and scholarship. Nelson (1999) argues that a singular focus on gender performativity, concerning how identities are built and maintained, limits geographical scholarship. Moreover, she contends that advancing the academic analysis of bodies can enhance our understanding
of how gender identities are constructed and sustained. Specifically, Nelson (1999, pg. 333) claims that:

The kinds of questions many geographers ask cannot be adequately addressed by a strictly performatively understanding of identity, an approach that assumes an already abstracted, time and placeless subject. Uncritically and loosely drawing on the language of performativity – or deploying it merely as an academic bon mot – limits our ability to explore the complex dynamics between identity, space and change.

Nelson’s and Grosz’s call to action illustrate how important it is to examine not only gender representations and the human interactions in place but also bodily representations and forms of embodiment. How different bodies organize themselves within specific places relates to gender power dynamics along with the gender representations of place (Johnson and Longhurst, 2010).

Bodily Boundaries

Materiality is a significant contributor in creating subjectivity (Kristeva, 1982). Looking at and examining how the body or bodies function in particular places and spaces serves as a productive way of exploring the relationships between gender, identity, spaces, and places (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Bodies are surfaces of social, cultural and political inscription. A person is a body and embodied experiences are unique because the body inhabits the culture and identity of a particular place (Longhurst, 2001). The body is the center of experience. Furthermore, our materiality can determine how we experience places. Bodies can be both privileged and othered depending on the spaces they inhabit throughout their everyday (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Longhurst (2001, pg. 22) states, ‘The call to understand the importance of the body is often simultaneously a call for the fluidity of subjectivity, for the instability of the binary of sexual difference,
and for a host of other working assumptions.” Johnston and Longhurst (2010) further this position by claiming that the body houses subjectivity. Bodies are subjects, and the variances of embodied experiences indicate that there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ body. Therefore, bodies are sites where power and subjectivity are inscribed.

According to Foucault (1995), power exists everywhere and affects all bodies. However, how power impacts bodies can vary because no single form of power exists (Foucault, 1995; Whiston, 2007). Because power exists everywhere and because all bodies have power this causes power relations to be incredibly multidimensional and complex. Whitson (2007, pg. 2921) states, “power operates through a net-like structure, rejecting the standard dichotomy of the powerful and the powerless in favor of a multiform, ubiquitous conceptualization of power.” Therefore, how bodies act, behave and organize themselves is based on established and structured hegemonic normative practices within place (Bell, Binnie, Holliday Longhurst, and Peace, 2001). Johnston and Longhurst (2010, pg. 40) state, “Bodies cannot be separated from experiences of spaces and places.” These notions further illuminate that such bodily expression(s) which relate to gender or sexuality are not necessarily ‘natural’ expressions but become naturalized by society based upon surround power structures (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). From Foucault’s (1995) perspective, bodies are disciplined and punished when they step out of the bounds determined by society. Fat shaming and slut shaming are two examples of such punishments.

The material directly connects to one’s very sense of self, but any sense of self is ultimately unstable because our bodies are ultimately unstable (Kristeva, 1982). Bodily
boundaries are, as explained by Longhurst (2001, pg. 5), “the liminal spaces where the exteriority and interiority of bodies merge.” Bodily boundaries become disturbed when the materiality of the body breaks the exterior social constructs. Bodily disruptions, such as menstrual blood, challenge the desire for a clean and proper body. Such challenges ultimately test bodily ownership and subjectivity while simultaneously creating what Mansfield (2000, pg. 83) calls “the drama of abjection.” The drama of abjection is based upon the permeable borders between the inside and outside of the material (Kristeva, 1982). Kristeva (1982, pg. 4) explains, “it is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.” Grosz, (1995, pg. 2) further adds to what is considered to be the ideal body:

The preferred body was one under control, pliable, amenable to the subject’s will: The fit and healthy body, the tight body, the street-smart body, the body transcending itself into the infinity of cyberspace. A body more amenable, malleable, and more subordinate to mind or will than ever before.

The body Grosz (1995) describes above receives privileges within society while bodies that are not so compliant are considered unpredictable, messy and thus disciplined. As a result, bodily fluids are not just indicators of biological differences, but they also illuminate how bodily boundaries are culturally produced by hegemonic patriarchal structures (Longhurst, 2008).

The messy and unstable materiality of bodies refers to the fluids that leak, seep, and ooze from the body (Longhurst, 2008). When geographers discuss the body, many times the boundaries of bodies are excluded from academic discussion and analysis (Longhurst, 2008). Specifically, geographers have failed to analyze how the fluids that
seep and leak from the body connect to hegemonic gendered power relations and to place and space (Longhurst, 2008). This omission of leaky and messy bodies is important because these fluids and messiness correlate mainly to bodies that identify as female (Longhurst, 2001). Giving birth, breastfeeding, menstruating, and becoming pregnant are all highly associated with these leaky and messy fluids.

Bodies and their fluids are not merely biological, but they represent social and gender relations. Longhurst states (2008, pg. 32), “lived experiences of body fluids are mediated through cultural representations and through sex/gender.” Therefore, these messy and leaky fluids are most often feminized and the bodies where the fluids derived from are othered and subordinated. Of course, all bodies leak and seep, but all bodies and bodily fluids are not treated the same; such ‘feminized’ fluids, as described above, are positioned against what is seen as the stable, solid, rational and impenetrable male body (Longhurst, 2001).

As a result of this construction, the abject impulse is directly connected to bodily bound women, the feminine, and specifically to the lived maternal bodies. When it comes to pregnant embodiment, Kristeva (1981, pg. 31) states:

Pregnancy seems to be experienced as the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and another, of nature and consciousness, of physiology and speech.

Furthermore according to Kristeva (1981), the most prominent site of abjection in the development of any individual is in the maternal body.

Longhurst (2008) states the pregnant body is a useful example when addressing bodily boundaries because such bodies have insecure boundaries. Longhurst (2008, pg.
65) when concluding her case study on how pregnant bodies break bodily boundaries states, “Pregnant women are constructed as modes of seepage and as matter out of place.” It is because of their associated leakage, Longhurst (2008) argues, that they are not welcome in public space. Their seepage makes them “unpredictable” in public spaces. This results in pregnant bodies receiving attention while in public space (Longhurst, 2008).

Furthermore, Longhurst (2001) argues that a research gap has developed in geographical scholarship due to excluding the body from a geographic analysis. Longhurst (2001, pg. 18) explains:

The body has been an ‘absent presence’. When examining examples of geographies typical of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s it is possible to detect traces of the body (but not necessarily bodily traces)... A complex politics of knowledge was being articulated in the 1990s whereby the body is often present in geographical discourse but bears no messy traces of its materiality.

Since Longhurst’s publication in 2001, bodies have received more attention within geographic literature (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). As previously stated, geographers now recognized and examine the connection between the body, space, place, gender and sexuality (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). However, part of Longhurst’s critique regarding the omission of “messy and leaky” bodies in space continues to remain true.

Othering and excluding messy and leaky bodies further contributes to the dominance of hegemonic masculinities within knowledge production (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). By omitting messy and leaky bodies, they then remain invisible and are seen as illegitimate for academic analysis. This destabilization of knowledge production opens up the metaphorical door for the emergence of analysis that focuses on
the “dirty”, specifically subjects that have an emphasis on the messy and leaky components of human embodiment.

Despite this shift from using the body as a signifier to a site of signification Longhurst (2008, pg. 2) states, “geographers have published little on what surely must be one of, if not the, most important of all bodies… that is, maternal bodies”. Maternal bodies are bodies that conceive, give birth, and provide sustenance to other living bodies (Longhurst, 2008). The identities and personal experiences associated with maternal bodies are diverse, complex, and multifaceted (Longhurst, 2008). Politics, specifically gender politics, produce the spaces that make up everyday geographies, and this construction influences the diversity and complexity of maternal bodies in relation to identities and experiences (Longhurst, 2008).

However, Longhurst’s call to the geographic community has not gone unanswered. Feminist geographers have researched maternities and the interest in growing. Research and publications have been produced that range from breast-feeding to childbirth preferences (see, for example, Boyer, 2010; Boyer 2011; Boyer 2012; Pain, Baild and Mowl, 2001; Emple and Hannah, 2014; Klimpel and Whitson, 2016). Such research on maternities unpacks how pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood are embedded in a set of social conditions that can be manipulated based on the gender politics that are culturally produced, and maintained within the spaces they inhabit (Longhurst, 2008).
Maternities

Maternal identities are complex and multidimensional. Pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and motherhood all fall under the umbrella of maternal identities (Longhurst, 2008). Analyzing maternal bodies and their subsequent identities and subjectivities is necessary because our ever-changing human culture and power structures socially produce what is classified as maternities. Maternities, within this context, also refers to maternal subjectivity. Longhurst (2008, pg. 2) puts it best by stating, “representation, understandings, and cultural inscriptions quite literally constitute maternal bodies and help produce them as such. Maternal bodies are socially, sexually, ethnically, class specific bodies that are mutable in terms of their cultural production.” Since maternities are so multidimensional and complex, it has been gaining attention both in academic circles and within popular culture. Social theorists, academics, reporters, documentarians, and even celebrity gossip bloggers are all examining and discussing various components of maternal subjectivity (Kawash, 2011).

Iris Marion Young’s (2005) phenomenological examination of pregnant embodiment draws uses Kristeva’s (1982) argument that a pregnant body is a double subject or has double subjectivity. Young (2005) uses Kristeva’s framework and applies it to pregnant embodiment in order to specifically deconstruct the notion that pregnancy is something that women are “expecting.” This is notion of expecting exists because much of the discourse that surrounds pregnancy implies waiting. Young (2005, pg. 54) states:
We refer to women as “expecting” as thought this new life were flying in from another planet and she sat in her rocking chair by the window, occasionally moving the curtain aside to see whether the ship is coming.

Young’s quote signifies that the discourse around waiting implies that nothing is happening below the surface of the pregnant body. When in fact, that is simply not true.

Pregnancy is a time of embodied change and growth. The pregnant body is an equal participate in the process of pregnancy and childbirth. Therefore, how subjectivity forms through the pregnant body matters. Young (2005, pg. 49) states, “Reflection on the experience of pregnancy reveals a body subjectivity that is decentered, myself in the mode of not being myself.” She explains how this split subjectivity begins to occur when she feels the fetus moves inside herself. Young (2005) argues that due to the pregnant body’s split subjectivity, the boundaries between fetus and mother are blurry and unstable. Young (2005, pg. 49) explains:

Pregnancy challenges the integration of my body experience by rendering fluid the boundary between what is within, myself and what is outside separate. I experience my insides as the space of another, yet my own body.

Young (2005, pg. 50) further explains how she is made aware of her pregnant body, as she moves through her everyday spaces and places:

I feel myself being touched and touching simultaneously, both on my knee and my belly. The belly is other, since I did not expect it there, but since I feel the touch upon it, it is me.

This touching of her belly takes Young directly back to her materiality while she lives her life and accomplishes her daily tasks. It also connects her body to her split subjectivity. Since material changes occur rapidly during pregnancy and this causes borders of the pregnant body are seen as volatile and unpredictable (Longhurst, 2008).
Other recent feminist literature on maternities focuses on how institutions or
governments enact control over maternal bodies. For example, O’Neil and Kaufert (1995)
present a case study in which Inuit women in northern Canada lost control over how they
as a gender, and also as an Inuit culture, could deliver their children. These Inuit women
were ultimately forced to conform to what was considered, by the state, to be a more
acceptable method of childbirth, which is a hospital-based birth. O’Neil and Kaufert
(1995) claim this loss of control resulted in the state excluding Inuit women from their
culture, and further, that the unequal power structure that currently exists between Inuit
women and the state make it difficult for Inuit women to enact more control over how
their birth experience (O’Neil and Kaufert, 1995). Gordon (2002) similarly claims that
governmental and institutional control over maternal bodies (see, for example, Fraser,
1995) connects to hegemonic control over reproduction. Gordon, (2002, pg. 375) states,
“trying to control reproduction has been a human activity as far back as historians can
trace it.” Attempting to control reproduction highlights the notion that the female body is
many times constructed as moral property or even territory, that is continually being
fought over by various societal institutions (Gordon, 2002).

For feminist geographers, maternities are culturally produced and reproduced
within space and the production of maternal identities contributes to the social
reproduction of power and subjectivity within space (Longhurst 2008). Emple and
Hannah (2014) along with Fox, Heffernan and Nicolson (2009) illustrate how both
pregnancy and childbirth, while embodied biological processes, are directly connected to
place and representations. Emple and Hannah (2014) illuminate how experiences of
childbirth are culturally shaped based on spatiality their case study on hospital birth deliveries in the Twin Cities, Minnesota. Emple and Hannah (2014) concluded that conventional maternal care in the Twin Cities is purposefully constructed, at an institutional level, for diverse childbirth options for pregnant bodies. This construction made the birthing landscape more inclusive and varied because of the range of care offered to birthing bodies.

When such diversity in childbirth or other maternal services does not exist, like in the case study provided by O’Neil and Kaufert (1995), forms of birth practices can be placed on the outskirts of society or viewed as less legitimate. O'Neil and Kaufert (1995, pg. 65) state:

In Canada, midwifery has virtually disappeared from the public health care system and continues to function only in the homebirth sphere of the childbirth universe. Its practitioners and clients are considered radical, indeed dangerous, and it is excluded from all public funding.

These examples of childbirth practices highlight why it is important for geographers to study maternities. Maternal practices and identities are not universal; they are complicated and vary across space and place.

As previously stated the term maternity encompasses various forms of embodiment and identities. However, within the maternal spectrum, it is often motherhood that receives the most attention from academics (see, for examples, Kawash, 2011; O’Reilly, 2010; Rich, 1976). As a result of such academic work, which started in the early 2000's, “Motherhood Studies” is now a legitimate sub-field within Women’s Studies (Kawash, 2011). Such focus on motherhood mainly involves examining motherhood as an institution, the marginalization of motherhood within feminist theory,
maternal activism, distinguishing between motherhood and mothering, and strategies for maternal empowerment (Kawash, 2011 and O’Reilly, 2010).

When looking how academics research and talk about maternities within universities, motherhood again receives the most attention. Castaneda and Isgro (2013, pg.4) state, “mothers learning and working in academia are experiencing a reality that deserves to be acknowledged and taken into account.” Such attention and subsequent scholarship deals mainly with the hardships and difficulties that come from working as an academic and being a mother (see, for example, Castaneda and Isgro, 2013; Evans and Grant, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden, 2013; and Raddon, 2002). Such difficulties surround current demography, which illuminates the unequal gender representations regarding professionals working academia (Evans and Grant, 2008). From a binary perspective, far more men than women have positions of power and prestige within academia (Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden, 2013) but women, as a gendered group, receive slightly more than half of the doctoral degrees granted in the United States. This gap illuminates the lack of female representation within neoliberal universities and as a result, the academy, according to Castaneda and Isgro (2013, pg.4), “continues to wane as a welcoming place for women.”

As a result of these inequalities, colleges and universities prove to be a unique place to study maternal subjectivity and forms of embodiment. Castaneda and Isgro (2013) advocate analyzing maternities within spaces of academia. In their edited volume Mothers in Academia (2013, pg. 3) they state, “academia as a collegiate and professional work environment and its impact on mothers have become and important site of
analysis.” The positions of and the experiences of maternal bodies within academia are significant because how bodies position themselves and what they experience directly connect to the unique power structures and relations within the academy.

The Neoliberal University

The neoliberalization of universities involves incorporating free market management practices that focus on making universities more efficient and profitable (Freeman, 2000). Incorporating neoliberal politics within systems of academia causes higher education to be seen as a commodity within larger society. Viewing universities as commodities contributes to universities feeling pressure to sell employable majors. Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun (2011, pg. 490) explain:

Because universities today sell a path to the labor market, they must distinguish themselves in the higher education marketplace by replaying the finessing a competitive rating system and by selling ‘marketable’ majors to the student-consumers they have enticed to their campuses.

The university has become a commoditized space where pressure is placed on individual bodies to meet and achieve established desired metrics. Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun (2011, pg. 496) state, “spaces and times of education are limited and controlled by financialization and its accompanying disciplinary metrics.” From the position of faculty members and graduate students this has drastically influenced how professors and students prioritize their work and how university management evaluates their work.

Universities are not and have never been perfect spaces, which is why academics across disciplines continue to critique various components of the university and academic life. However, in recent years, more higher education professionals,
mainly faculty, are critiquing the increasing corporatization and neoliberalization of universities (see, for example, Butterwick and Dawson, 2005; Harman and Darab, 2012; Sharff, Wojcicka and Lessinger, 1994; and Smith, 2000). It is important to note that such contemporary critiques are not yearning for times gone by within academia (Freeman, 2000). They are critiquing what is currently happening within universities, not advocating returning to the 1950’s. As previously stated, universities are and have always been imperfect institutions. Capitalism and societal business interests have always influenced how universities function. Furthermore, universities manifest unequal power relations that connect to how labor is bought and sold (Freeman, 2000). Forms of unequal representation have especially been the case in regards to the employment of bodies with varying races, genders and sexualities (Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun, 2011).

However, the increasing corporatization and neoliberalization within universities today are affecting bodies differently. Freeman (2000, pg. 248) states, “I would argue, not that the corporatization of universities is a new phenomenon, but that rather that is occurring in a very different political, economic, technological, cultural and ideological context than in previous decades.” For better and for worse, universities are adapting neoliberal policies at a faster rate than ever before (Pusey and Sealey-Huggins, 2013). As a result, the effects of increasing neoliberalization in universities are written on the bodies that take up space within the institutions (Mountz et al., 2015).

Feminist geographers are currently critiquing and illuminating the effects that the neoliberalization of universities has on bodies, specifically non-hegemonic bodies (see,
for example, Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014; Mountz et al.; and Mullings, Peak, and Parizeau, 2016). In other words, feminist geographers are looking at bodies that are not white, do not present as male and are not able-bodied within the university context. Examining such bodies is important because it is in direct contrast to what is believed to be the ideal and privileged academic body within a neoliberal institution. Castaneda and Isgro (2013, pg. 3) state, “There is still much to do in terms of challenging the cultural notion that the ideal intellectual worker is male gendered.” Hawkins, Manzi and Ojeda (2014, pg. 3434) further add to what is considered to be the ideal academic body:

The professional body of an academic is inscribed with constructions of an idealized white subject…under (neo)liberalism it is the individuals responsibility to assimilate to the white/masculine culture in order to be seen as a professional body.

Examining non-white, non-male identified bodies is important because how bodies experience being in a university connects to the positionality of bodies within the university, which connects to and is influenced by larger social hegemonic power structures. Freeman (2000, pg. 246) adopts this position when explaining:

There are many perspectives to consider and an adequate understanding of the complexity of the problems at hand much begin with recognition of how differently positioned and empowered these perspectives are in the hierarchies that structure universities.

Freeman’s notion is an important distinction because it shows how the current problems that exist within universities cannot be solely reduced to neoliberalism (Hawkins, Mani, and Ojeda, 2014). The neoliberalization of universities further regulates bodies in an already complicated institution full of social hierarchies and unjust power dynamics (Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun, 2011). In other words, the subjectivity and positionality
of bodies will always affect what those bodies experience and how those bodies recognize the experiences of others.

Very recently feminist geographers began to write on how the neoliberal polices adopted by their institutions have affected their embodied realities and professional work. Such work has illuminated shared professional aggregations while also advocating for resistance to occur in the form of incorporating slow scholarship. Mountz et al., (2015, pg. 1239) expressed their frustrations as academic laborers with the increased focus on “metric-based accounting regimes” within their departments and universities. Creating a counting culture within the academy places emphasis on the number rather than the quality of publications produced and classes taught. Mountz et al. (2015, pg. 1243) state:

Counting culture leads to intense, insidious forms of institutional shaming, subject–making, and self–surveillance. It compels us to enumerate and self-audit, rather than listen and converse, engage with colleagues, students, friends and family, or involve ourselves in the meaningful and time-consuming work that supports and engages our research and broader communities.

Such a culture produces feelings of isolation and shame (Mountz et al., 2015) not just for faculty members but also for graduate students. Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun (2011, pg. 493) explain:

In the years preceding tenure, academic labor is made to conform to a set of external measure—with serious consequences for the kinds of research and teaching that can be done – the same is true for the experience of graduate students, who from the day they begin their programs are asked to fashion themselves according to the metrics by which tenure will be decided far in the future, should they be so fortunate to gain one of the dwindling number of tenure-track jobs.
Graduate students within neoliberal universities take on a multitude of functions within neoliberal universities yet they possess very little to no power within the university systems.

Like the feminist geographers above, geography graduate students are beginning to publish more on their own experiences as graduate students with a feminist embodiment perspective. A major theme that has emerged in this budding mode of scholarship is the notion that graduate students are not respected as having lives outside the university. Hawkins, Manzi and Ojeda (2014, pg. 330) state, “graduate students are not considered to have full responsibilities, families, needs, non-academic interest, the ability to shop for and eat proper food, or even the ability to visit the doctor and dentist regularly.” The bodies of graduate students are directly affected by neoliberal pressures because they have little to no power within universities (Freeman, 2000).

Teaching and graduate assistants need to please both their own students and their professors and advisors, and the needs of all can many times complete with one another. Juggling these multiple obligations makes it difficult to find a work-life balance for graduate students (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014). This leads many graduate students to believe that their real lives will begin after graduation. Hawkins, Manzi and Ojeda (2014, pg. 339) state that such an idea causes graduate students, “to delay other personal goals such as getting a permanent job, buying property, starting a family or getting married.” By examining and publishing embodied experiences, geography graduate students are illuminating how academic pressures and the neoliberal notion regarding what it means to be a graduate student directly impacts the bodies of graduate students.
Summary

This chapter illustrated how neoliberal universities can be a gendered place that privileges bodies that identify as male over bodies that identify as female. Furthermore, this chapter connected the subject formation and experiences that surround the embodiment of pregnancy to spatiality by drawing on feminist geography and bodily boundaries, along with placing bodies as sites of power and resistance. While research has been conducted on maternities and more specifically maternities within the neoliberal university, no research exists that focuses on pregnant graduate students within the academy. It is critical that we look at the unique experiences and subjectivities of pregnant graduate students within the university. Such insight can shed light on power structures and subject formation. For the remainder of this thesis, I will present my research design and methods along with my results and analysis on pregnant graduate students.
CHAPTER 3: EMPLOYING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS WITHIN A CRITICAL FEMINIST PARADIGM

During the winter of 2016, I carried out the necessary fieldwork for my research on pregnant graduate students. This fieldwork involved conducting twenty-three semi-structured interviews to gain both personal and institutional insight regarding what pregnancy can be like for a full-time graduate student at a neoliberal university. I worked with two distinct population samples. The first sample focused on personal experiences of pregnancy, so the interviews were with individuals who were currently pregnant or had been pregnant while attending graduate school within the past three years. The interviewees in both samples expressed a varied range of embodied, personal and professional experiences. The second sample focused on establishing context for how universities, as institutions, treat pregnant bodies. Interviewees within this sample were working professionals. Specifically, they were individuals who currently work addressing the needs of graduate students within a neoliberal university. The data gained through these interviews proved to be extremely fruitful while highlighting complexities that surround pregnant bodies within universities.

This chapter describes and advocates for the methodological approach used to conduct this study. I explicitly explain why I chose to carry out my fieldwork under a qualitative research design and a critical feminist paradigm. Second I describe how the research was conducted along with providing demographics regarding my sample of participants. This chapter concludes by offering an overview of how the collected data was analyzed. Finally, this chapter seeks to illustrate how complex and complicated the
research process can, and to explain how these complexities were approached and treated at the methodological stage of research.

Methodological Approach

This research asks questions that surround the intersection of social and instructional power structures and embodied experiences, and the research study was conducted using critical feminist qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are commonly used within human geography because they allow for “multiple conceptual approaches and methods of inquiry” (Winchester, 2010, pg. 3). Furthermore, qualitative research methods are well suited to capture what Rossman and Rallis (2003) describe as, “crucial aspects.” According to Rossman and Rallis (2003, pg. 63), “crucial aspects of doing research include adopting the standards for acceptable practice and taking an ethical position while coping with the politics of research and world of study.” Along with using qualitative methods, employing a critical feminist paradigm within my qualitative research design provided me with additional guidance as I navigated the crucial aspects and components my research entailed.

Critical Theory Paradigm in Geography

Critical theory, as explained Guba and Lincoln (1998), is an approach to research design that critiques and challenges social structures that harm and abuse people. I chose to apply a critical theory paradigm because as the researcher, I seek to challenge the unequal power structures that exist at neoliberal universities and to encourage change. As previously stated, one of the goals of this research is to illuminate how pregnant bodies
experience university spaces and to ultimately improve and encourage graduate programs of all disciplines to be more inclusive of all types of bodies.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) further elaborate on critical theory by stating that critical theorists aim to look at how inequalities are shaped by gender, class, race, power, and culture. This concept also applies to my research goals. This study specifically looks at how university spaces influence the subjectivity of pregnant bodies, which are directly connected to and associated with the female gender within our society. Furthermore, the ways that experiences and identities surrounding not just pregnant bodies but all maternal bodies are created and structured throughout place and space is based on both past and present societal constructions (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). Researching pregnant bodies at this scale can and should stimulate questions regarding the treatment of other types of maternal bodies at other scales and how such treatments connect to inequalities that surround the constructs of gender and sexuality.

Doing Feminist Research

I selected a feminist methodology because this approach is inclusive and ethical. Most importantly, this perspective does not seek to universalize experiences or identities. In fact, it celebrates diversity while exploring and trying to better understand the multiple, and many time contradictory, truths that surround all kinds of bodies (Moss, 2002). Moss (2002, pg. 12) explains, “making a methodology ‘feminist’ implies politicizing a methodology through feminism.” Moss's statement indicates that there is no one correct way to conduct feminist research. Therefore, employing feminist methods in
research means to focus on how such research is approached and how the corresponding
design methods are applied. Moss (2002, pg.12) explains this in further detail:

Feminist methodology is about the approach to research including conventional
aspects of research – the design, the data collection, the analysis, and the
circulation of information – and the lesser acknowledged aspects of conventional
research – relationships among people involved in the research process, the actual
conduct of the research, and process through which the research some to be
undertaken and completed.

Applying a feminist framework to this research became the guiding force behind all
components of this research.

The primary goals of feminist research are to collaborate with participants, not
exploit participants and their knowledge, to intentionally acknowledge and place the
researcher (myself) within the study, and to conduct research that illuminates the
experiences, thoughts, and feelings of marginalized groups (Creswell, 1998). These goals
are feminist in nature and they influenced every aspect of this study, from its inception to
completion. Most notably, these goals affected from whom data was collected and how
that data was collected.

To best attempt at making this research more of a collaborative effort between the
participants and myself, I wanted the participants to be positioned similarly to myself in
society. Selecting graduate students and university professionals met this research
objective. I was able to talk personally about being both a graduate student and a
university employee with the participants. I offered up personal information about myself
so the participants and me could relate to one another.

During all my interactions, I allowed myself to experience and express feelings of
empathy and vulnerability. The topic of pregnancy can be very intimate, and since I
wanted participants to open up about their experiences and feelings that they may have kept quiet, they too deserved to receive the same level of emotional connection and vulnerability from me. For example, one participant broke down while explaining she was currently separated from her husband because he was physically and emotionally abusive. Before I tactfully moved the conversation back to the subject of her pregnancy, I first disclosed that I too had experienced intimate partner violence. It was an emotional and vulnerable conversation for both of us but by being vulnerable and honest with one another, our conversation was incredibly rich and deep.

While no research is free from exploitation (see, for example, Smith, 2016), and because social interactions always have inherent power dynamics (Elwood and Martin, 2000), I made efforts to ensure that the participants and I operated on equal playing fields as much as possible. First, all participants received, for their time, a pre-activated Visa Gift card in the amount of $15.00 by mail. Second, when I met with participants in person, I allowed them to select the meeting location and during these meetings I was continuously cognizant of the micro-geographies at play (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Furthermore, I informed all participants that I would hopefully submit this work to an academic journal for publication within the next year. If or when an article is ever accepted for publication, I further explained to all participants how I plan to contact them via email to let them know where it will be published along with who they can contact if they feel the article presents any inaccuracies or distorts any findings.

Operating under a feminist framework means this research was also transactional. This means that I, as the researcher, recognize how I bring my ideas and perceptions
regarding how gender connects to politics and bodies into this research. Analyzing my placement and subjectivity within this research continues to help me better understand the relationships and interactions I had with the participants along with the research process in general. As explained by Dowling (2010, pg. 19), “Societal structures and behaviors are not separate from research interactions.” My personal ontology and epistemology influenced how I have positioned myself with this research (Winchester, 2010). I identify and present as female and as a feminist, I am a part of and contribute to the current gender politics within our society. Furthermore, I am also a part of the neoliberal university. As a graduate student, I have held both the positions of a graduate assistant and teaching assistant. As a result, I am a part of both the gender and university constructs, and I too contribute to its social production. Identifying and analyzing my placement in this research is important because it contextualizes the research and provides insight into where I am coming from and how the research was conducted (Moss, 2002).

As feminism(s) have advanced, so have feminist methodologies. When doing feminist research the researcher collects and analyzes data while simultaneously engaging with feminist politics. So in that spirit, deciding to conduct feminist research within geography was very much a personal and a politically conscious decision. This decision is based on the perspective that geography, as an academic discipline, historically has and continues to privilege what Moss (2002, pg. 7) calls, “a masculine subject position.” Privileging the masculine within geography continues to not only reinforce binaries such as culture and nature, object and subject, and male and female, but it also silences
experiences and forms of knowledge (Moss, 2002). This research is pushing back on privileging the masculine position by engaging in research with methods that ethically illuminate experiences while also challenging the gendered politics that surround knowledge production. Furthermore, applying this critical theory paradigm is, in itself, a value statement. I believe that it is important within research to challenge and question hegemonic establishments, such as universities. Academic research can and should stand alongside other social justice efforts (Guba and Lincoln, 1999).

**Research Method Design**

The specific methods for this research were designed with the intent to gain a better understanding of what life is like while pregnant in graduate school. To best gather this information I used a methodological approach that relied exclusively on semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviews are beneficial because they fill in what Dunn (2010, pg. 102) calls, “a knowledge gap.” In other words, interviews allow the researcher to capture forms of knowledge that observations or surveys cannot. I used semi-structured interviews because this research method best method to captures both personal experiences along with the opinions and feelings that surround experiences (Dunn, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are also content focused, and they allow for greater flexibility and fluidity to take place between the researcher and participant than other data collection methods. As a result, this method was used because it best allows for an exchange of information between individuals, which best aligned with my research goals and questions.
In-depth interviews enable the possibility of exchanging richer and deeper information with participants. Again, this method aligned with my research goals and questions. Pregnant bodies experience pregnancy differently. Thus, the goal of in-depth interviews in this research is to gain insight into the personal experiences and feelings of pregnancy and how pregnant bodies are treated and viewed from an institutional level.

**Interviews**

Altogether, twenty-three interviews were conducted between January 2016 and March 2016. Twenty out of the twenty-three interviewees were individuals who experienced a pregnancy while pursuing a graduate degree within the past three years. Four out of the twenty interviewees were women who, at the time of the interview, were currently pregnant while pursuing a graduate degree and the remaining three interviewees were individuals who, at the date of the interview, worked within a neoliberal university where they assisted and addressed the needs of graduate students.

I employed a criterion sampling methods to obtain participants who experienced a pregnancy while pursuing a graduate degree at a neoliberal university within the last three years: criterion sampling and snowball sampling. The criterion method of sampling involves selecting participants that met the needs of the study, in this case, women who have been pregnant while pursuing a graduate degree within the last three years. In order to identify and access participants, I selected particular university and community organizations to recruit from to provide me with pregnant bodies who would meet the needs of this research. I reached out to this pool of individuals via email and public announcements along with print advertisements all of which explained the research
objectives, personal compensation and how to contact me. I recruited sixteen interviewees within this sample, in this way. I received the most success in gaining participates by posting a “call to participate in research” (Appendix A) through an international email forum that focuses on Women’s Studies. This forum focuses on issues that surround the academic discipline of Women's Studies. Calls or advertisements to participate in research projects are a common occurrence within in this forum. After I had received initial contact by an interested subject, I clarified the intended participant met the research requirements and if that person did, we scheduled and interview.

The second method I used to identify and access participants who experienced a pregnancy while pursuing a graduate degree at a neoliberal university within the last three years was the snowball method. The snowball method requires gathering a few select participants and asking if they knew someone else who would meet the research requirements. I asked participants if they knew of anyone who fulfilled the needs of the study according to the criterion sample described above, and who they believe would be interested in participating. I recruited four interviewees in this way. When someone provided me with a contact, I reached out to that individual via email and asked if they would like to participate. In that initial email, I outlined who gave me their contact information, the goals of the research, individual compensation, and how to contact me if they were interested in participating. If the person answered my email with interest, I again clarified the intended participant met the research requirements, and if that person did, we scheduled and interview.
For the second sample of interviewees, I employed a criterion sampling method to identify participants who were currently employed, at the time of the interview, at a neoliberal university where a portion of their job involved working with and addressing the needs of graduate students. I specifically reached out to professionals who worked within student accessibilities and disabilities departments, Title IX offices, women’s and LGBT campus centers and academic advising departments through their professional email asking if they would like to participate. I recruited three professional individuals in this way: a program coordinator within a Women’s Center, an academic advisor within the College of Arts and Sciences, and a faculty member who served as the advisor to board members on the graduate student senate. These three professionals were the only individuals who responded to my email and met the requirements to participate.

This research was primarily interested in the personal experiences of pregnant bodies, so the vast majority of interviews conducted were with individuals who fell into the first sample category. Specifically, I interviewed sixteen women who experienced a pregnancy while pursuing a graduate degree within the past three years and I interviewed four women who, at the time of the interview, were currently pregnant while pursuing a graduate degree. Demographically speaking, this sample was very homogeneous. Eighteen participates identified as white, leaving only two individuals of color. Only one interviewee was an international student, the rest were domestic U.S. citizens, Furthermore, all participants identified as cisgender women and they were married to cisgender men during their pregnancies.
However, the sample of graduate student participants was diverse in terms of the level of education and academic discipline. *Figure 1.1* below provides the numerical breakdown regarding the academic level and academic discipline of this sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pregnant Graduate Students Interviewees</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 doctoral students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2 pregnant during interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 12 pregnant during the last 3 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4 in natural sciences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 10 in social sciences/humanities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 masters students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2 pregnant during interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4 pregnant during the last 3 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2 in natural science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4 in social sciences/humanities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1.1: Academic level and discipline*

Furthermore, two out of these twenty interviews took place in person at a public place of the participants choosing. The remainder of the interviews occurred through video chat via Skype or Facetime.

Interviews with the graduate student participants lasted between 60 to 120 minutes. The interviews focused on lived experiences and personal feelings regarding what experiencing a pregnancy while attending graduate school is like (see Appendix B for complete interview protocol). All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed.
to a windows word document. Lastly, within a week after the completed interview, I mailed the participants a thank you card along with the pre-activated visa gift card.

Since this research is also interested in institutional policy and procedures that affected pregnant bodies at universities, I conducted three semi-structured interviews, with full time working professionals. Again, demographically speaking, this sample was very homogeneous. All three interviewees identified as white cisgender women. These interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and they provided context to how universities view and treat pregnant bodies. Questions focused on how their university does and does not accommodate and or protect the interests of pregnant graduate students. Questions also focused on if and how pregnant graduate students face discrimination (see Appendix C for complete interview protocol). All three interviews conducted, within this sample were done so in person at a public place of the participants choosing, recorded with an audio recorder and transcribed. Again, within a week after the completed interview I mailed the participants a thank you card along with the pre-activated visa gift card, in the same amount of $15.00.

After the transcribing all interviews, I analytically coded the texts using N-Vivo software. Within N-Vivo, I first used the method of descriptive coding to identify basic information and themes within interviews (Cope, 2005). Second, I used the focus coding method. Focus coding allowed me to concentrate on specific phrases and terms used by my interviewees. Coding was imperative within this research. Through coding, new material and connections emerged. These connections proved to be both enlightening and thought provoking.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I use the interviews I conducted, both from graduate students who experienced a pregnancy while in graduate school and with working professionals, to illustrate how the perceptions, anxieties and an overall lack of institutional support which surrounds the embodied experiences of pregnant graduate students is influenced by and correlates to the gendering of universities as places and the gender power relations within universities. Drawing on these interviews, I first present information that illustrates how extreme the demands on the lives of graduate students are within neoliberal universities. Second I argue the neoliberal university is not a supportive institution for pregnant graduate students. Third, I argue that due to the lack of institutional support, pregnant graduate students exercise their agency, regardless of how little it may be, through support networks to effectively negotiate both a graduate career and a pregnancy. Lastly, I argue that the pregnant graduate student body is both a body out of place and on display within neoliberal universities. I connect these elements together by showing how pregnancy challenges professional and interpersonal relationships within the lives of graduate students. The visibility and intensity of these challenges increase when the university, or even the student’s academic department, fails to create a culture that is inclusive and encouraging of having a life outside of the confines of the university.

Demands on Graduate Students within Neoliberal Universities

I think that you are continually held to a higher standard in academia, personally, and I think that it is the reason that students, and particularly graduate students, are often insecure in the work that they are producing. Like, is it good enough? Is it done enough? Is it what is should be? I think that, I think that is a major difference. I was just saying this recently, I think it’s a major difference between an undergraduate career and a graduate career. In an undergraduate career your
intellect is nourished and encouraged and promoted and in a graduate program you’re questioned. Your intellect is questioned. You’re being formed into the thing that you should be, rather nourished into what you could be. – Micah, Ph.D. Candidate in English

This excerpt reveals a sentiment expressed by many research participants: intense pressure to perform at their highest level possible at all times in graduate school. When I broached topics relating to the requirements of graduate school with my graduate student participants, a common theme that emerged was that the participants felt as if graduate students are always required and expected to be in "production mode" at all times, and anything that disrupts production or has the potential to disrupt one's production is viewed negatively within academic departments. As a result, many of the participants believed their academic departments saw pregnancy and motherhood as potential interferences for possible production. Dauphine, who was finishing up her Ph.D. in Biology when she had her first child, offered up this example, which illustrates how disruptions to production can be viewed negatively within academia:

[My son] came 2 weeks early, which is in the realm of pretty normal, but I was just trying to get as far as I could with my research. So literally the day before he was born I did like a surgery on one of my research animals and I taught a class. I was really tired that night. I was really tired and I was planning to do a surgery the next day and I was going to meet [my advisor] at the farm. And I just didn't feel right when I woke up, and of course it turns out I’m in labor, so I worked literally till the night before he was born. So I went in and had him and within the next two weeks I turned in three grants, and when he was 2 1/2 weeks old I got an email from my advisor that said, “You've missed eco lunch,” which is like this weekly seminar. “I wasn't aware this was optional,” was the email I got.

While the focus of this research is pregnancy in graduate school, Dauphine’s story illustrates the pressure that exists to produce as much as possible while pregnant for fear of falling behind within graduate school. Dauphine’s story also shows how anything that
interferes with a student’s production, in this case pregnancy leading to becoming a mother, can be viewed in a negative fashion and with little regard within one’s department. It is impossible to know if Dauphine’s advisor would have replied the in the same fashion if Dauphine did not have a baby. It is impossible to know if Dauphine’s advisor would have replied the in the same manner if Dauphine did not have a baby. What is important is that Dauphine attributed the negative treatment she received to the fact that she just gave birth. The treatment Dauphine received while pregnant and postpartum cannot be separated from how she experienced being pregnant and a new mother.

This focus on production, as described by graduate student participants, supports existing literature that states that universities are sites of commoditization where intense pressures are placed on individual bodies to meet and achieve established desired metrics despite possible costs to one’s life outside of the university (Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun, 2011). This emphasis on metrics directly relates to the increasing neoliberal management practices within universities. Thus, both the literature and statements made by my graduate student participants, regarding the intense demands placed upon them and their bodies, illustrate how the increasing neoliberalization of universities drastically affects the lives and bodies of graduate students (Mountz et al., 2015).

Along with believing graduate students always have to be in production mode, another extreme demand internalized by my interviewees was the notion that universities have little regard for personal lives, family emergencies, and personal illnesses of graduate students. Such responses by participants provide further support to literature that
argues universities do not recognize that graduate students have lives outside the university (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014). Furthermore, due to this institutional lack of awareness for the lives of graduate students, the graduate students interviewed for this research expressed that the graduate student experience, because of the lack of a personal life outside of the university, resulted in feeling like one is in a limbo stage of life. This idea of one’s life being in limbo during graduate school directly corresponds to literature that argues graduate students, in general, feel like they have to put their personal lives and goals on hold while attending graduate school (Freeman, 2000).

In my interviews, opinions regarding the lack of institutional awareness and consideration for the full lives of graduate students did not only belong to graduate students. Amy a full-time staff member, who works as coordinator within a student services department stated:

We need to deal with the fact that graduate students have lives. Like they are going to get sick, a family member is going to get sick, they are going to get pregnant or their partner is going to get pregnant. There needs to be [institutional] safety measures to deal with those things. There needs to be leave policies for one thing, paid leave policies, that graduate students can take advance of and that take into account that a graduate student is a human-fucking-being and that something is really important is happening to them…so when something happens to [graduate students] it shouldn't fall on [graduate students] to feel like the bad guy or the jerk because they are going to take time off, especially when it comes to pregnancy.

These feelings and pressures that one has to put one’s life on hold both annoyed and aggravated the research participants. The research participants explained while graduate students are indeed students, they also are adults with adult lives. Dauphine offered this explanation regarding the issues that surround graduate students not being viewed as adults, with adult lives, or as academic professionals:
I think that the problem with grad school, in some ways, was that you are treated like it’s an extension of undergrad. And the reality is that, you know, I graduated when I was 30, I had owned a house before grad school, you know, you are not straight out of your parents house! But I think it burrows deep into your adult life and the faculty and administration treat you like a young adult. So you know everything from dental insurance to needing time to deal with anything, a family crisis, like if you have a sick parent or personal problem. You are on your own…The semester before I started a professor’s father had died and she had basically taken a semester to go be with him and I couldn't help but think, I think that’s great, I think that’s appropriate. But if that had happened to one of us (a fellow graduate student), it would have been, “why aren't you doing what you should be doing?”

Dauphine’s perspective corresponds to arguments made by Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda (2014). Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda (2014) discuss how graduate students specifically find in tough to carve out a work-like balance. This difficulty exists, according to, Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda (2014), because the power structures in place within neoliberal universities do not consider personal lives of graduate students significant. Graduate students are seen purely as production machines (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014). Universities can show how they view the lives and bodies of graduate students based on if and how and support is offered and structured at the institutional level.

**Lack of Institutional Support**

In general, universities do not provide institutional support or accommodations for pregnant graduate students. According to the research participants who are professionals within neoliberal universities, universities offer little protection for pregnant graduate students. Hillary, an academic advisor who also serves as an advisor for board members of the graduate student senate within her institution stated:

There is no leave policy in place for graduate students, even though in a lot of ways, they are professionals. They are teaching and engaging in research. They are doing a lot of the same work faculty is doing but they have none of the benefits. And, at least at this institution, they make very little in terms of money.
It’s just so fucked up. I mean there is no assumption that [a pregnant graduate student] going to get time off, there is no net in place to give support, like if something goes wrong with a pregnancy or if [a pregnant graduate student] gives birth early, there is just nothing in place to support them.

This overall lack of institutional support for pregnant graduate student circles back around and supports the argument that universities are places that do not acknowledge the full lives of graduate students (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014).

Additionally, according to the research participants, for a graduate student to be successful in their program, it is essential for them to have a supportive and attentive advisor. Due to the observed importance of this relationship by my graduate student participants, my interviewees did not want to do anything that could potentially jeopardize how their advisors viewed them. This is because their success as academics is many times contingent upon the attention and coaching they receive from their advisor (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014).

This relationship between an advisor and advisee is riddled with complicated and established power dynamics that most of the time place all power in the hands of the advisor and little, if any, in the advisee’s hands (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014). This power structure between advisor and advisee further shows how universities are places that produce unequal power relations (Freeman, 2000). These inequalities are socially reproduced at institutional and interpersonal levels (Freeman, 2000).

Since graduate students lack institutional power and interpersonal power with their advisors, if an advising relationship sours or is not productive, it can drastically affect the academic progression of a graduate student (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014). According to my graduate student interviewees, because was pregnancy was seen
as something that would limit one's academic production, they believed it would be a possible reason for causing an advising relationship could turn from productive to counterproductive. Such a situation happened to Tiffany. When I pressed Tiffany after she stated she felt her pregnancy negatively influenced her working relationship with her advisor, she stated:

She didn't treat me badly at all. Well, not verbally, but in other ways, yeah maybe in other ways she did. You know, cause that semester was the semester I was supposed to begin starting my dissertation and because I was pregnant and I was so close to the end, so to speak, I felt a lot of pressure to try and finish everything up so that I would be more present for my child. During that phase I was like writing my proposal for my dissertation and, I mean, I wouldn't get any feedback from her (advisor) for like months. It would take her three months to respond back. Yeah it was crazy. And in fact, that semester of my dissertation which was my pregnancy period from my second to third trimester, I think I gave her a drafts in like October and I never got it back until after my daughter died. So my daughter died in January, two days after she was born and after that I got my draft. It was just a frustrating semester because here I am, trying to move forward. It just was really hurtful to me. It took that very drastic thing to happen in my life for her to be like, “Well here is your draft.” All semester all long I've been telling you I want my draft back so I could be present for this point and it was very low blow to me and I literally didn't do anything on it, I didn't respond for a couple months later. Cause I was just trying to get over that.

While Tiffany’s story is heartbreaking, it shows how pregnancy has the potential to affect the working relationship between a graduate student and their advisor. It also illustrates how graduate students lack power in their relationship with their advisor (Freeman, 2000). It is not possible to know if Tiffany’s advisor avoided her and her work because Tiffany was pregnant and no longer thought Tiffany was now worth her time, or just that she did not do it for other reasons that were not connected to Tiffany's pregnancy. However, Tiffany’s perception that her advisor treated her poorly because she was
pregnant is what matters. Experiences like Tiffany’s reinforce the notion that pregnancy and graduate school do not and should not overlap.

Even if advisors turn out to be supportive, disclosing a pregnancy to one’s academic advisor(s) was the most nerve-racking conversation for participants to experience. Participants were scared to tell their advisors about their pregnancies because they did not want to be viewed as less serious and they did not want to “disappoint” their advisors. Ashley, a Ph.D. candidate in Evolutionary Biology, who was pregnant during our interview with her first child, told me about the time when she first told her two academic advisors she was pregnant.

I did like almost start crying when I told my male advisor. I was way better the second time when I told my female advisor because he [her male advisor] had such a good reaction. But I definitely was feeling very stressed about it, because I wasn’t sure what their reaction would be. Even though they are both very nice people, you never know what they are going to think, because they are trying to get the most out of you and help you with your career. So yeah, I guess I was anxious.

Ashley’s advisors continued to support her throughout her pregnancy but that did not take away from her personal fears of what her advisors would think of her and her pregnancy.

Furthermore, the parenthood status of advisors influenced how pregnant graduate students felt about disclosing their pregnancy. This means, that if a student’s advisor had children of their own, the fear of receiving negative reactions from one’s advisor lessened, while their fear intensified if an advisor was not a parent. The interaction below with a participant demonstrates the correlation between the parenthood statuses of advisors to perceived fear and anxiety when disclosing or “coming out” as pregnant. Allison, a masters student in Sociology, who was pregnant with her first child during our
interview, describes sending an email to her advisor about her pregnancy. She comments,

When I was writing the emails to my advisor I didn't realize it was going to be scary till I hit send. Then I was like checking my phone every few seconds just to make sure she wasn't going to kick me out of the program because I was pregnant. Which is absurd, she was happy for me. But it was a lot more stressful than I thought it would be… I think it was like, after sending it, I thought, “What if I don't know and she is not supportive?” So I was just kind of doubting myself, I think, about having an extra responsibility and still having to do all the things that it takes to be successful in grad school. Like maybe she would think I can't do all of them cause its like a whole extra thing. Like she is really successful and doesn't have kids. Her pets are like her kids. I think that part of stress was coming from that. Just not knowing how much, not like sympathy or empathy, but how much understanding she would have was difficult to gage because of that.

However, exceptions do exist. I was lucky to interview three graduate student participants who all attended affiliate locations of the same state institution. At this particular state institution, graduate students are unionized. None of the other students I interviewed belonged to a graduate student union. The experiences of pregnancy for these three individuals who were in unionized institutions were much more positive than the other participants because their university provided institutional support. According to these participates, the institutional support provided by the university permeated through campus culture and as a result a more supportive culture towards motherhood and parenthood existed on campus. Allison, a masters student studying sociology, while pregnancy with her first child, stated:

The entire pregnancy has been very a positive experience for me. The entire thing has been very nice. I don’t have a bad thing to say about being pregnant in grad school… [Being pregnant] hasn't really defined the way people treat me.

Regarding how these women receive support at this unionized institution, Marie, a Ph.D. candidate in Biological Sciences who had her second child while in graduate school,
offers her reasons why incorporating a pregnancy and parenthood has been a positive experience for her and her family:

[My son] is going to the day care on campus with me. It’s really great. It was another reason why I thought it would be a good idea to have a child in graduate school because [the university] gives a student discount. It’s like 75 percent off tuition and because I am a teaching assistant I get reimbursed everything I pay. So it’s likes free childcare. I’m friends with a few faculty members and they are paying $1,200 for their infant to be in daycare. I pay $256 dollars but at the end of the semester I get it all back. It’s really great. It's for all students, undergrad and graduate students who have children. And they just started this, maybe about a year and a half ago.

Allison’s and Marie’s statements illustrate how a supportive environment at an institutional level can affect how one experiences pregnancy while in graduate school. According to the working professionals I interviewed, ways institutions can show support to pregnant and maternal bodies could be through providing paid parental leave, lactation rooms, and dependable childcare. However, enacting these measures of support are difficult because it requires a shift in discourse regarding how universities see and treat the lives and bodies of graduate students.

As previously stated, these positive experiences were the exceptions. The main difference being that graduate students have unionized at the university where these exceptions occurred. Unionization, particularly for graduate students, implies a change in discourse and a redistribution of power within a university (Freeman, 2000). In other words, unionization benefits graduate students because it gives graduate students, through collective action, more power and agency within the university as an institution. This power gained can be used towards forcing a university to see that graduate students are
people that have full lives and graduate students value their lives and time outside of the university (Freeman, 2000).

**Negotiating Pregnancy Through Support Structures**

According to the research participants, due to the overall lack of institutional support for pregnant bodies within universities, and due to the notion that pregnancy will delay one’s academic progression, it is critical for pregnant graduate students to find both emotional and practical support from their academic advisors, colleagues at the university, intimate partners, and family members. It is through these professional and personal relationships that the participants were able to exercise their own agency to successfully incorporate and negotiate a pregnancy in their lives. According to my graduate research participants, having strong and consistent emotional and practical support made the demands of graduate school, specifically that one always has to be in the "production mode," easier to manage from both an emotional and practical standpoint.

For the graduate students interviewed for this research, academic advisors, while a part of the neoliberal academic institution, played a key role in providing support during and after pregnancy. While the previous section recounted an instance in which an academic advisor was not supportive of her pregnant graduate student, for some research participants their academic advisors and committee members supported their pregnancy by advocating on their behalf. When I asked Helen, a Ph.D. candidate in Women’s and Gender Studies, about how her advisors advocated for her, she stated:

The biggest accommodation they made, and this is something they offered to me. I didn't even ask for. It was just like the biggest gift. So [my child] was due in August of 2014 and I was, at that time, the undergraduate academic advisor and I was scheduled to go back to in class teaching in the fall. So essentially, [my child]
would have been born and then I would have been responsible for teaching in person for all of fall 2014. [My academic advisors] approached me with was because I was a graduate teaching assistant I was obliged to teach two classes for my funding but what they did was make an offer where I could teach a spring class and a three credit May term class. They basically shifted my two teaching obligations to the second half of the year and gave me all of autumn of 2014 off and because I was on a year contract, and I was paid. So I essentially got 6 months maternity leave because my department just decided that they could have me teach in May instead of Fall. It was just like the biggest most amazing thing they have ever done.

Similarly, Ashley also received support from her advisor. Ashley, who experienced intense and anxiety while disclosing her pregnancy to her advisor stated:

[My advisor] just kind of paused a minute [when Ashley started crying] then he was like, “you know we are going to work all this out. We may have to change your time line a little bit but that is no big deal. We can make whatever work.”

These experiences illustrate how professionals within the university while a part of the disciplining structures and can also work against it.

According to my interviewees, pregnant graduate students also looked outside of the academy for support. Madeline, a master’s student in higher education who at the time of our interview was currently pregnant with her first child, stated:

I couldn't do this without a supportive partner. So, you know since September [when she found out she was pregnant] he does, I would say, 90% of the housework. You know, he washes all the laundry for us. He makes sure we have groceries and he cooks. He has really picked up this huge slack and I don't know if I would be able to be a good student and be a good worker if I was also having to worry about dinner and if I was having to worry about you know, like when was the last time we washed our sheets. You know those things. He makes sure that my car has gas. He has really picked up the home slack and that’s made me feel like I could focus on being a student and being pregnant especially. And I know this sounds like a little thing, but I’m the kind of person like if I get too busy I just won’t eat, like you know, you can't do that when you’re pregnant. So he makes sure that I'm eating and I’m eating healthy food and my purse has snacks in it. He is so supportive, and that’s been a huge thing for me, being able to focus on work and school because I don't have to focus on my home life.
While receiving emotional and practical support from a partner was instrumental in being able to be a productive and successful grad student, also receiving similar levels of support from family members benefited pregnant graduate students when their partners were busy or not around. Rachel, who while finishing up her Ph.D. in Women’s Studies had her first child, stated:

My family was super there for the pregnancy. The live about an hour away from me but they would come over almost every weekend. My brother-in-law came over and painted the guest room, which was going to be the baby's room. I mean they did everything. We would go, you know, shopping for the baby, my sister and mom had the baby shower. I mean it was first grandchild on both sides. I only have one sister and she couldn't have a baby, so we always kind of joke that I shared the pregnancy with her. I was really lucky in that I had major family support. I mean I'm just lucky, they were kind of my surrogate baby daddies, we always joked. Every sonogram I had, which was every month, we would have a whole little army come in. It was like my mom, my sister, and usually his [her husband's] mom would come to every single sonogram. All four of us gathering around, it was really fun and cool. We go to lunch after and you know it was big to do. The whole experience was a big to do for everyone. It was like everyone was pregnant.

Often, however, family members were not around, which is very common for graduate students. According to Freeman (2000) graduate students, many times live states away from their families and networks of family support. According to my interviewees, when this happened, pregnant graduate students found both emotional and practical support from colleagues within their circles of academia. I spoke to Ashley, a Ph.D. candidate in evolutionary biology, who was pregnant with her first child at the time of our interview while living states away from any family members. When I asked Ashley why receiving practical and emotional help from her fellow graduate student helped her, she stated:

I don't think I would have gotten nearly as much done and I would have been far more miserable and anxious I think about everything. You know, I feel, I really feel like I've done pretty well emotion wise. Cause I am very anxious person and I
was kind of concerned about… you know, your hormones are going crazy and I think if I didn't have all these people I would have been a far more emotional wreck. And I definably wouldn't have kept up at all with my timeline. There is just no physical way.

Ashley was in the data collection phase of her research, and this required her to perform surgeries on her research animals. These operations required her to use chemicals that were dangerous to expose to the fetus. Ashley’s fellow graduate students, who had no stake in her research project, helped her perform these surgeries, which limited dangerous exposures to her unborn child. Having this level of practical support caused Ashley to “stress out” less about her research project, which influenced how she experienced being a pregnant graduate student.

The participants’ experiences demonstrate that even though they lacked institutional power within the universities they attended, they still utilized their agency through their established networks of support. These professional and personal relationships with academic advisors, family members, intimate partners and university colleagues made it possible for them to incorporate successfully and negotiate a pregnancy and even motherhood in their lives as graduate students.

Bodies Out of Place and On Display

Pregnant graduate students are not common occurrences in academic departments regardless of the academic discipline. All of the graduate student participants stated they were the only pregnant student or had been the only pregnant student in their department for some time, regardless if their university was unionized. When I asked Ashley if there were or had been other pregnant graduate students in her department she stated:
Only one other [female] graduate student in recent history has had a child and there are a couple post-docs with kids. One is a male, but really very, very few. Really just the two [post-docs] I can think of have and one recently left. Out of how many people we have, we have like 30 just in our group within the department and there are not that many people with kids.

As a result of the absence of pregnant graduate students within universities, the graduate student research participants felt further separated and distinguished against bodies that are not pregnant. The absence of seeing pregnant bodies caused a broad range of experiences for my graduate student participants. For instance Anna, a Ph.D. candidate in Religion, explained that because she was the only pregnant person in her program she became reference material for other graduate students in her program. Anna stated:

I feel like I’ve kind of become a totem pole or something for whenever a graduate student is even thinking about it [becoming pregnant or having a child]. They will find me and ask me what was it like, even if they don't know me all that well. It’s like they are scoping out first-hand experience with me as to whether they are going to try it out. It’s like they are curious, they are thinking about it.

Anna enjoyed discussing her pregnancies and experiences of motherhood with her fellow graduate students. However, the enjoyment Anna experienced does not diminish the fact that her body and subsequent subjectivity was distinguished differently within her academic program. Her body, because she at one time was pregnant, stood out as different.

Another result of this lack of seeing pregnancy bodies on universities is that the pregnant graduate student participants felt “out of place” and “uncomfortable” in public places where they were not known on their university campuses. Specifically, the graduate student participants felt self-conscious walking across campuses in particular. Walking through public spaces invoked feelings of separation, difference, isolation, and
just an overall sense of discomfort for the participants. The reason for this discomfort, according to the participants, related to feelings that surrounded wanting to be viewed by the public as a “legitimate” and “respectable” body.

This notion of being a body ‘out of place’ directly connects to the gender politics that surround place (McDowell, 1990). McDowell (1990) argues that social-spatial power relations are what define places. The power dynamics within universities distinguish the university as a place all of its own (Hawkins, Manzi, and Ojeda, 2014). Furthermore, because pregnant bodies are perceived as messy bodies, this lessens their respectability within public places (Longhurst, 2008). For example, when I pressed Helen, a Ph.D. candidate in Women’s and Gender Studies, to explain why she felt emotionally uncomfortable walking around her campus, she stated:

If there was ever a self-conscious time, it was walking to the office, and so I'll have to give you back ground on this. So I’ve spoken about the 3 pregnancies during my grad school experience. I have another child who was born while I was in undergrad and I placed him for adoption, for an open adoption. My college pregnancy was an extremely stigmatizing and traumatizing experience. You know my whole family flipped out. I had to leave undergrad. It was just considered by everyone to be this huge failure on my part. And I untimely ended up leaving my son because of a lot of things. But mainly because of the social stigmata around me being a single, young, unwed woman from a conservative catholic family. So that was my first experience with pregnancy on campus long before I went to grad school. And so as a grad student and an instructor and advisor and I happen to be someone who looks younger than my age. I would be walking from the parking garage to my office and I would just like have these moments. I wondered if people looking at me thought I was an undergrad and pregnant. And you don't see hardly any pregnant undergrads on campus and so you do stand out on that walk. I think visibly pregnant women are just absent from the public space, of the university. So I definitely felt like I stood out like a sore thumb. It was only because I felt that if people thought I was an undergrad and pregnant this is bad or they are looking at me like I'm a slut or a whore. And there was no way on the walk for me to be like, “I'm an adult!” Even though I don't believe in that distinction that we should be looking down on people of any
age group who are pregnant. But I would say that negotiation of space was probably the most challenging.

While Helen’s experience being pregnant in graduate school was unique in that it invoked unpleasant feelings about her previous pregnancy that resulted in her placing her son up for adoption, her feelings of not wanting to be mistaken for an undergrad are not. Ashley further echoes this notion:

I've been kind of glad that is winter actually. Largely because I can wear a bigger coat and people don’t necessary know [that she is pregnant] but other times it is super obvious when I’m walking around class to class. Like, I know I put this on myself, but I feel awkward and kind of like judged or something because I know they don’t know my situation or anything, and I hope I look a little bit older than the undergars. I don't know. It makes me feel weird. Cause people stare at me. They will be walking and then I walk by and they follow me with their eyes…I feel out of place for sure. Just cause you don't see other pregnant people around like at all.

The graduate student participants I spoke to for this research felt the most vulnerable in the public places within their universities. These public open spaces evoked feelings of vulnerability. These feelings of vulnerability correlate to literature that argues that because pregnant bodies strongly associate with the female gender, they lack social power in public places (Longhurst, 2008). Power, or the lack thereof, within this context for the graduate student research participants, associated with not feeling like a “legitimate” and responsible body within public space. Being a pregnant as an undergrad would not be viewed as responsible thus the participants did not want to be associated with such an identity. Furthermore, being on full display when one already has a shortage of power influences how a pregnant body believes they are being perceived (Longhurst, 2008). According to my interviewees, these experiences can be very stressful, and such
stress can cause them to avoid places, mainly public spaces, where they lack power and respect.

Furthermore, as a pregnancy progresses and the pregnant body swells and grows so do personal feelings of uneasiness and self-consciousness within specific places. These feelings of insecurity are directly connected to the gender politics that surround specific places (McDowell, 1990). As the participants expressed, depending on where they were located spatially their feelings about their body changed. When I asked Madeline, who was very visibility pregnant at the time of our conversation about her experiences as a student in a classroom setting, with a very visible pregnant body, she stated:

The first day of class, it was like, people [other students in the class] were actively staring at my belly. It was just like mortifying. So it’s kind of been an interesting experience. Especially in, like, these 50 minute classes. You don't have a lot of time to talk to people. It’s a lecture class. So you kind of work independently, there is no group work or anything. You don't really get to know anyone. I have noticed like a definite difference in how they view my pregnant body verses how people in my program do. I mean some went straight from undergrad to grad but most people have been out working for a while, so they have like friends who are pregnant or married, or sisters or brothers. These undergrad students are like totally weirded out by a pregnant person in their class. [Madeline was enrolled in a duel graduate and undergraduate class.]

Madeline’s statement demonstrates how pregnant bodies are viewed differently depending upon their spatiality. These experiences relate to the gendering of place and once again illustrate how pregnant bodies break bodily boundaries within their everyday places (Johnson and Longhurst, 2010).

Furthermore, according to my interviewees, graduate students who were in the natural sciences felt that they were treated like biological specimens during their pregnancy. This means that they had the sensation that their bodies were being looked
and studied from a biological scientific perspective by their fellow graduate students, from faculty and staff within their departments, and by students in their classrooms. This sentiment comes out very clearly in the following comment from Ashley, a Ph.D. student in Evolutionary biology:

They've all [fellow graduate students] been really intrigued because I think they are scientists and they have no filter as far as asking me like what's going on right now and what is the weirdest thing that’s happening to me, and then the medical students are a whole other can of wars. Some of them caught on probably late October and so they were asking like a lot of personal questions. Which is OK with me. I teach anatomy so I have to talk about all the gross stuff all the time. So it didn't really faze me, but I just thought it was funny how open they felt asking me certain questions. You know as we went through the uterus and looking at the pelvis and that sort of thing. And they are like, oh what’s going with your uterus and how is that working? So that was kind of fun actually, I was a lot more into it because I was pregnant and seeing their excitement around the whole process was nice.

Dauphine, a Ph.D. student in Biology similarly explains the way that she felt on display with her colleagues and peers:

I’m 5 feet 3 inches, so I get really big really fast. There is just nowhere for it (the belly) to go. And then I just put on weight everywhere. I’m not like skinny, I’m usually a pretty slim person like in the 110 range and I think the recommended weight gain is like 25 to 30 pounds and I'm pretty much guaranteed to hit 40 to 45 pounds. Then like you know, when I was breastfeeding my son, I dropped down to 85 pounds. I can't keep weight on. So like I just get really big really fast and I remember my dear friend being like, “We were all just watching that and really worried about you, but then, you know, you turned back into you.” I’m like, “OK.” I also remember, so like another thing that is happening is the chemical relaxin is causing all of this ligament change. I had this ligament in my hip that was just really sore, so my waddle was very pronounced some days because it was just so painful to walk, and I worked on this hallway with this gate cycle bio mechanist who is like analyzing how I walked and she was like you really need to try not to do that and of course my response was like, you've never been pregnant! So I was being analyzed as a biological specimen within my department...there was that slight bit of tension because they were watching me do this thing that was very unfamiliar from a, you know, where’re all biologists we are all understanding what going on biologically, but to watch someone that you know
go through it in close quarters, its a very analytical group of people. I did not feel it in a bad way but I felt watched and observed.

These feelings parallel literature that argues how a pregnant body is seen connects to place and the gender politics that surround place (Longhurst, 2008). Furthermore, these experiences and interactions demonstrate the split subjectivity that exists within pregnant bodies (Young, 2005).

Summary

In this chapter, I used interviews and existing literature to argue that the lack of institutional support, personal concerns, and anxieties which all surround the embodied experiences of pregnant graduate students is influenced by and correlates to the gendering of universities as places and the gender power relations within neoliberal universities. I also identified the multiple ways in which students exercise their agency through support networks. These systems are necessary because it is through these networks of support that graduate students negotiate pregnancy and motherhood.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

When I sat down to write this conclusion I was reminded of the inspiring famous political rallying cry of the gay rights activist group, Queer Nation: “We’re here! We’re queer! Get used to it!” This mantra spoke to the unjust treatment of gays and lesbians within society, but also for me as a geographer, this mantra speaks to challenging and disrupting hegemonic discourses within place, specifically public spaces. What would it look like if pregnant graduate students started demonstrating in public spaces on university campuses chanting, “We’re here! We’re pregnant! Get used to it!” After conducting this research, I am sure such collective actions would disrupt hegemonic structures because as this research showed, the embodiment of pregnancy by graduate students directly challenges the gendered power structures within neoliberal universities. As a result of such challenges, the pregnant body becomes a site of resistance, agency, and social change.

This thesis sought to examine and explore through a critical feminist geographic framework how pregnant graduate students experience the spaces and places that make up neoliberal universities. To this end, this research illuminated how bodily boundaries and embodied identities correlate with the production and maintenance of power and subjectivity within the places and spaces that surround everyday geographies. Based on an analysis of 20 interviews with graduate students who had experienced pregnancy and three administrators who worked within a neoliberal university, this research highlighted the effects of the neoliberal university on the bodies of pregnant graduate students. It also identified the lack of institutional support for graduate students who are pregnant,
and the multiple ways that students find such support, including through advisors, family, and peers. The research presented here also demonstrated the ways in which graduate students feel “out of place” not only in the institution of the university, but in its actual spaces. In particular, students felt both vulnerable and self-conscious in public spaces. Graduate students also described feeling that their pregnant bodies were on display within actual spaces within their universities. In particular, graduates students who were studying in ‘natural science’ departments felt as if their bodies were on display for study as biological specimens.

I connected these particular feelings to Longhurst’s (2008) theory that pregnant bodies primarily feel marked as ‘other’ in public spaces because they break socially constructed bodily boundaries due to the perceptions that they are messy and leaky. I made this connection because the public spaces within universities are not the only public spaces or places where pregnant people have expressed feeling out of place (see, for example, Longhurst, 2008). However, the notion of feeling out of place and on display is distinctive within university spaces because it connects to the politics that surround identities within a neoliberal university context.

To walk across a university campus while visibly pregnant invokes different feelings than walking through a public park or shopping center. To be pregnant while attending school, any school, is not viewed in a positive manner. It is ultimately considered irresponsible to be a pregnant student on a college campus. This further explains, why many of the participants were concerned about looking younger than their age because the typical college student is between the ages of 18-22.
not want to be mistaken as undergraduate students because that would invoke assumptions of unplanned pregnancies and ultimately irresponsibility. Fear of being viewed as irresponsible is not something a pregnant person would experience while shopping or walking through a public park, generally speaking. However, such assumptions and feelings expressed by participants do not take away from the more general argument that the pregnant body breaks bodily boundaries. The university context simply further complicates identity production and gender power relations.

The results of this research have numerous implications. First, this research has the potential to add to research on embodied resistance through everyday lived experience. I concluded every interview by asking all participates what advice would they give to a graduate student who just found out they were pregnant. All participates expressed, in some way, shape, or form, that one should be proud of their pregnancy. Participants mentioned this even in cases in which they themselves had experienced episodes of doubt and a lack self-confidence throughout their pregnancy. For example, Helen states:

Be unapologetic about it. I feel especially in academia you almost have to apologize for being pregnant or its like expected to hide, but if you’re just unapologetic about being pregnant like I feel like for me, its like, created situations where they don't feel like they can confront me on it. I am confident in this pregnancy and it’s not something that I am ashamed of or going to hide. So when you are unapologetic about it, people have no choice but to accept it sometimes. Like, this is how it’s going to be.

Statements like Helen’s, which echo feeling prideful in ones body illustrate how the pregnant body is political, regardless of intentionality. Indeed, in this instance, Helen’s pregnancy, and the pregnancy of other graduate student participants in this research,
could be read as a form of resistance enacted through the body on an everyday scale (Whitson, 2007). For me, this was the important element that emerged in this research: pregnant bodies are sites of power and resistance.

Bodies are surfaces of social, cultural and political inscription (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010) and for power to exist, it must operate through the material (Butler, 1993). It is power that marks the body, and the body is an object of power (Caudwell, 2003). Since the body is established as a site of political struggle, it can also be a site of resistance (Grosz, 1995). Grosz (1995. Pg. 36) states, “if bodies are traversed and infiltrated by knowledges, meanings, and power, they can also under certain circumstances, become sites of struggle and resistance, actively inscribing themselves on social practices.” Feminist scholars are now looking at how bodies act as sites of resistance (see, for example, Azzarito and Solmon, 2006; Caudwell, 2003; and Whitson, 2007). This research hopes to add to and advance this scholarship and connect it to maternal bodies and identities.

Secondly, I hope this research shows how forms and experiences of embodiment correlate to power structures within larger society. Knowledge is subjective and we live our lives subjectively. Experiences of embodiment are a significant component of human existence, and they deserve recognition within the academy. By learning more about the lived experiences of pregnant graduate students we, as geographers, can more efficiently challenge hegemonic structures that support and reproduce patriarchal structures that privilege the bodies and identities of men within institutions.
Thirdly, this research contributes to feminist geographic scholarship that examines the relationship between bodies, gender, and power. Pregnant bodies should not be sequestered within university spaces or be made to feel like they do not belong or are on display. Today’s current neoliberal university is indeed a gendered place that disciplines pregnant bodies because of the perceived “messiness” and unpredictability of pregnant bodies, and that an individual body can and does act as sites of resistance. These examinations of place illustrate how gender representations and interactions within places influence the cultural productions of gender and gender performances. All of these relationships are, in turn, developed and maintained by the modality of power (Butler, 1993).

While the geographic literature on maternities and pregnant bodies is small, it is growing. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to make an attempt to contribute to this area of scholarship. Additionally, this study expands the research on maternities by connecting it to another increasing geographic interest: neoliberalism. How one experiences pregnancy and neoliberalism are extremely varied. Both experiences correlate to power and subjectivity and provide feminist geographers windows to view and analyze the production and maintenance of gender relations. Furthermore, this study equally contributes to broader scholarship and theory on maternities. Regarding scholarship outside geography, this study brings a much-needed sensitivity and emphasis on place while exploring the intersections of pregnancy and institutions from the disadvantaged position of a graduate student. Ultimately, it is my hope that this research will spark new questions and discussions regarding bodies, embodiment, effects of
neoliberalism, and maternal identities. Asking questions are the only way conversations surrounding pregnancy can move forward, and treatment of pregnant people will improve in all places and spaces.
REFERENCES


Fox, Rebecca, Kristen Heffernan, and Paula Nicolson. 2009. “‘I Don’t Think It Was Such a Big Deal Back Then’: Changing Experiences of Pregnancy Across Two Generations of Women in South-East England.” *Gender, Place, and Culture* 16, no. 5: 553-568.


Katie Merkle, a geography graduate student at Ohio University, is conducting research on what it's like to be pregnant while in graduate school and she is looking for interview participants. The purpose of Katie’s study is to gain insight regarding what it is like to be pregnant while pursuing a graduate degree. All data collected will be kept confidential and no names will be used in reporting results.

If you have been pregnant while pursuing a graduate degree within the past 3 years and want to participate please contact Katie via email at km177205@ohio.edu to schedule your hour-long interview.

All participants will receive a $15.00 Visa gift card.
# APPENDIX B:

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO WERE PREGNANT WHILE IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

### Basis for Questioning

| Attempting to establish when participant found she was pregnant and if the pregnancy was planned to occur while she was in graduate school. |

### Questions for participants

| What was it like for you to be pregnant while also pursuing a graduate degree? |
| Was this your first pregnancy? |
| o If not, how did it compare with your previous pregnancy/pregnancies? |
| When did you find out you were pregnant? |
| Was your pregnancy planned? |
| o If so, how did you decide it was the right time to get pregnant? |
| o If not, how do you feel about being pregnant after you found out you were? |
| What were you expecting your life to be like while pregnant? |
| What types of emotional support did you have when you were pregnant? |
| o How were you supported? |
| Who within your graduate program did you first tell you were pregnant? |
| o Why that person? |
| o What did that conversation look like? |
| Did you openly talk about your pregnancy to others who were involved in your graduate program? |
| o If so, who, in what ways and how did you come to that decision? |
| Attempting to find out how participant divulged her pregnancy and how other students, faculty and staff treated her. |
• What was it like interacting with other graduate students while you were pregnant?
  o How were you treated?
  o How did it make you feel?
  o How did this change as your pregnancy progressed?

• What was it like interacting with professors and other university staff members while pregnant?
  o How were you treated?
  o How did it make you feel?
  o How did this change as your pregnancy progressed?

• Were other students in your graduate program pregnant during your time as a graduate student?
  o If so, what was it like observing their pregnancy?

• Were other students in your graduate program who become parents during your time as a graduate student?
  o If so, how were they treated compared to how you were treated?

• Were you able to meet your personal goals in your graduate program while pregnant?
  o If so, in what ways?
  o If not, why and how do you think it would have been different if you were not pregnant?

• Were you able to meet your graduate program’s goals while you were pregnant?
  o If so, in what ways?
  o If not, why and how do you think it would have been
different if you were not pregnant?

- Can you tell me about a frustrating experience that happened to you because you were pregnant during your graduate program?

- Can you tell me about a positive or satisfying experience that happened to you because you were pregnant during your graduate program?

Attempting to find out how participate felt about being on campus

- How did you feel walking around campus as your pregnancy progressed?

- What spaces on campus did you feel particularly comfortable in?
  - Why those spaces?
  - If no such space exists, why didn’t you feel comfortable?

- What spaces on campus did you feel particularly uncomfortable in?
  - Why those spaces?
  - If no such space exists, why didn’t you feel uncomfortable?

- Did you participate in any university programs and or services that were designed to support or assist pregnant women or mothers who were also in graduate school?
  - If so, what were they? Were they helpful? Please describe.

- What types of university programs do you think would help pregnant graduate students?

Wrap up, attempting to flush out any other feelings and experiences.

- What would you wish you would have known?

- What advice would you give to a graduate student who just found out they are pregnant?
APPENDIX C:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis for Questioning</th>
<th>Questions for participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Attempting to find out how the participant felt pregnant graduate students are treated within universities | • Based on your professional experience and position what makes pregnant graduate students unique compared to graduate students who are not pregnant?  
  o If so, what are they?  
  o If not, why not?  
• Do pregnant graduate students have different practical needs compared to graduate students who are not pregnant?  
  o If so, what are they?  
  o If not, why not?  
• Do you think pregnant graduate students are targets for discrimination?  
  o If so, how?  
  o If not, why not?  
• How may a pregnant graduate student be discriminated against within a university?  
• How can universities best support graduate students who are also pregnant?  
• Can you tell me about a time when you, or someone you know, worked directly with a pregnant graduate student regarding something that was related to their pregnancy?  
• What advice would you give to a graduate student who just found out they are pregnant?  |