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A comparative study of women and workplace flexibility

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN AND WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the many women who spent time with me and allowed me to discover intimate details of their childhoods and work/life experiences. Thank you for adding to the body of work on work life flexibility.

I want to thank my family who consistently asked, "How are you doing on that paper?" Even when I hadn't touched it for months at a time, each time they asked served as ammunition for me to finish. To my father, whom I lost a couple of months before my Pepperdine graduation, thank you for always believing in me and supporting me. And to my mom, who wanted her Ed.D., but never pursued it, "I did this for you".

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ABSTRACT

This study explores flexible workplace practices across several companies to examine the

experiences of working women located in the Southeastern region of the United States.

   Three primary research questions guided this study:

  1. What experiences (relationships, professional, and personal) as well as motivational

factors shape the life course of women in corporate settings who pursue or choose not to pursue a

flexible schedule, and how have the experiences impacted work-life integration decisions?

  2. What similarities and differences exist, if any, between women who opted for a flexible

schedule and those who chose not to pursue flexible options?

  3. What are the relationships between influencers and career goals related to flexible work

     decisions (i.e., "What influenced you to make the decision?")?

   While several studies have provided data on why women opt out of the workforce, or do

not return after significant life changes, only a few have used a specific framework to share the

personal stories of women leveraging flexible work practices to highlight their experiences,

motivations, and role of faith in their lives and work.

   A comparison was conducted between women who work from home full time, and those who

do not.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Organizations that provide flexible work policies and systems enable employees to focus on important values and life experiences other than work, such as aging parents, educational pursuits, children, community, and spirituality. Many of these factors contribute to an individual's overall sense of well-being (Parker & Wang, 2013), but having the ability to "choose" to work flexibly is not an option for everyone. When an organization does provide flexibility options, they may vary based on an employee's level or role in the organization, or the culture of the organization may make it difficult to take advantage of them. Due to several factors, women and men often suffer disproportionately when an organization does not offer or discourages the ability to work flexibly (Silverman, 2011).

This study explores flexible workplace practices across several industries and companies to examine the experiences of working women. Examining why women are or are not offered flexible arrangements, and whether they choose to use them, will inform practical strategies for organizations aspiring to attract and retain female employees and utilize best practices for flexible working in corporate settings.

Background

There are many reasons cited for the disparity between the experiences of men and women in the workplace, but the two cited most often are cultural preferences of employers and choices of employees (Giele, 2003). These are both institutional and historical factors. In many cases, the fact that women and men are socialized differently impacts the gender roles and norms that still plague the workforce today.

Women are now entering college and graduating at higher rates than males (Chwierut, 2014).   An article entitled, "Where are all of the men," states that women see the long-term rewards of a college education. Albeit, there remain barriers that women face in their While

women are now entering college and graduating at higher rates than males, there remain barriers that women face in their journeys to achieve their full potential. During their careers, many women still encounter the *glass ceiling* that prohibits them from excelling in their careers at the same rate as men; although they can see up to the top, they find themselves stopped before they can reach it (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The glass ceiling may be a factor of attitudes from executive leadership or the organizational culture (Perriton, 2009), but it might also exist due to a lack of desire on the part of the female employee, perhaps due itself to a perception that work-life integration is impossible in the upper echelons.

Statement of the Problem

First, the gender imbalance evident at the executive level at most major organizations may be due to engrained attitudes of the primarily male-dominated executive leadership itself. Leaders in an organization with gender inequality issues will have to adjust the organizational structure, policies, practices, and culture to achieve gender equality (Baird & Bradley, 1978). This could mean implementing initiatives to shed light on the need to increase female representation within the organization, develop work from home policies, provide flexible work options, and look at ways to increase the pipeline of female executive roles through mentoring and coaching, particularly as women return from maternity leave (Moen & Yu, 2000).

Organizational cultures may also play a role in trapping women under the glass ceiling. Roles in leadership are characterized by loyalty and dedication of time and resources. Time is a critical component to the demonstration of ambition and progress in one's discipline of choice. Long days and face time in the office are equivalent to, and accepted as evidence of, commitment (Williams, 2001). Company dedication through continuous service leads to promotion as well as recognition and rewards. The focus of time connected to this way of thinking highlights a model based on biases influenced by gender roles: the man works and the

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wife is the child bearer and stays at home full-time. These stereotypes have implications for women in the workplace and their ability to be credible leaders. They also have cultural implications on women and their desires to exit and re-enter the workforce without consequences as they endure life changing events, such as childbirth or elder care (Hattery, 2001).

Yet, the anxiety that comes from working long hours creates a time constraint that is a necessary aspect of the work-life integration conflict women struggle with to navigate work and life in corporate settings. Research highlights the adverse impact that toxic cultures of corporate settings can have on women, validating the gender biases which exist. A hostile work environment is one example of a bias that reflects a woman's inability to adhere to prevailing standards of time (Williams & Segal, 2003). Most recently, the term, *flexibility-bias*, has been brought forth as more workers desire to work flexible schedules that work in direct contrast to time norms (Ryan & Morgeson, 2008; King, 2008; Ruben & Wooten, 2007).

Some women feel there is an unconscious bias that exists when it comes to promote women who are on flexible work arrangements compared to their male counterparts who work full-time schedules (Sandberg, 2013). Unconscious bias comes from frames of reference and serve as filters for what an individual sees as wrong or right, good or bad, based on own socialization, norms, values, upbringing, and backgrounds (Binaji & Greenwald, 2013). Some leaders who manage women have blind spots and do not recognize that they are making decisions and judgments about a woman's ability to succeed based on their own societal norms and preferences. For example, it is a natural assumption that a woman may need to travel less when she returns from maternity leave; however, good leaders will ask instead of assume. One should never assume he or she understands all the details of someone else's situation. Blind spots can be deadly with regards to someone's career, potential promotion, or ability to be high potential (Binaji & Greenwald, 2013).

Organizations that are savvy to the notion that raising awareness of these biases and blind spots can have a significant positive effect on the careers and lives of women and can help people leaders, particularly male leaders, understand the adverse impact unconscious biases can have on women. Given leadership in large organizations is dominated by men, there is a perspective that if companies invested more dollars in coaching men on how to help women choose viable options, they would recognize there is more than one path for women to choose. Hewlett, Forster, Sherbin, Shiller, and Sumberg (2010) call this off ramping and on ramping. It is the idea that there are ebbs and flows in the lives of women and men where they may need to off-ramp their careers to adjust to a new baby, or an elderly parent, or another life-changing event. Then when the baby is older and stable, or the other situations are more comfortable, the women can ramp back up. On-ramps and off-ramps are concepts that companies have started to adopt as they consider how a woman's career path may change over time.

Often, reduced-time and part-time workers suffer consequences during annual evaluations due to managers focusing more on the worker's time away versus their accomplishments (Budig & England, 2001). Thus, women who are not in the workplace or are taking advantage of flexible work options often experience bias when it comes time to be promoted. Gender bias is against the law, but it is still part of some corporate cultures, even though in some cases, the bias may be unconscious, and may be linked to flexible work practices.

While flexibility bias is still an emerging trend, evidence of its prevalence has been validated in recent studies on wage and hour violations (Budig & England, 2001). In some studies, part-time workers were tracked and stereotyped as "mommy-workers." In many Fortune 100 organizations, special training and guidance is provided to hire managers to help them understand how to aid their workers in navigating flexible work options (Krymis, 2011).

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There is no other setting that embodies the importance of time more than that of professional settings (e.g. law offices, accounting, consulting) where the billable-hour model is prevalent. Billable hours serve as the marker for commitment and competence, and therefore, women who work less hours because of a flexible arrangement are perceived as less committed. Thus, employees are less likely to request reduced work schedules based on the stigma within an organization that flexible working is a violation of the norm (Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Saute, 1999). To that end, some women would rather leave their jobs than ask for a benefit that is available to many in corporate settings, the ability to leverage flexible work practices. Some companies are creating more formalized work from home policies as organizations become more virtual. The virtual knowledge worker helps to save an organization time, money, and space. They can work from their homes or remotely from wherever they are. They can use flexible work practices and work in a time and space that is convenient. Flexible work practices rely on available technology, policies, communication, structures, and trust to enable workers to resolve client and customer issues as well as collaborate with colleagues, despite individuals not being or working in the same office (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

Many professional organizations no longer must abide by strict guidelines that some labor-intensive organizations must abide by. Working in white collar professional service environments eliminates the need to comply to wage and hour laws that blue collar roles are subjected to. By the very nature of working in professional settings, women are subjected to standards of work created by and for men. Some of the cultural norms, such as late meetings, frequent travel, or long hours, make it challenging for women who may have responsibilities at home (Williams, 2001). Thus, the phenomena of the ideal-worker (Acker, 1990) are characterized by someone who can solely devote themselves to their work, rather than juggling the responsibilities of work and home. Moen and Roehling (2004) refer to a *career mystique* in

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which there is an expectation that "employees will invest all of their time and energy and commitment throughout the 'prime' of their adult years in their jobs, with the promise of moving up" (p. 5).

The purpose of fairness and equality, specifically for women, is not to eliminate men in management or executive leadership but to bring women to the same level of respect and parity in the organization, which includes access to management roles. A level playing field would create a just workplace environment in which everyone can be successful, including both men and women who take advantage of flexible work options (Sandberg, 2013). Employees want to be valued and respected. When female employees are told that they do not appear as committed as their male colleagues, their morale may be negatively impacted, which begins a pernicious cycle. When people are demoralized, excluded, or devalued, they will not be productive employees; morale also has a direct correlation to productivity and profitability (McCue & Gianakis, 1997; Rowley, Hossain, & Barry, 2010; Weakliam & Frenkel, 2006). A toxic work environment may also give rise to requests to work flexibly: it is one way to take a break from the disruptions, low morale, and political climate that is often pervasive in a corporate setting. Thus, a woman who works flexibly may experience discrimination that leads her to want to continue working remotely to escape the hostility of the work environment.

It is also common to find obstacles that have been in place since the inception of an organization and are part of the culture. Women who have been a part of an organization for a long period may have a different perspective on gender issues in an organization, and how deeply it affects them and their morale and motivations than their younger counterparts (Wirth, 2001). More than ever, successful executive women are sought out as role models helping to demonstrate to younger women that it is possible to move up the ranks and become the next female in the C-suite, all while juggling a spouse, children, and aging parents. The plight of the

woman working flexibly in the workplace has generational implications as well, even more so when it comes to the norms of working family (Sandberg, 2013).

The ability for both men and women to juggle priorities of work and home is tantamount to realize some sense of balance. The lives of working families today are very complicated for many reasons. There is an increase in female breadwinners, stay-at-home fathers, and men who reduce their hours to allow their wives with powerful careers to climb the corporate ladder (Filipovic, 2013). Many working parents pour a lot of energy into their daily work and work upwards of 58 hours a week, collectively, while families with children work on average a combined 91 hours a week (Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 2004). Many working women feel the pressures of time and begin to seek out new job opportunities to help with work-life integration (Filipovic, 2013). This, then, impacts the gender imbalance in the primary organization, thus fueling inequity.

Statement of the Purpose

This phenomenological study will explore the narratives of women's lives as they juggle their work activities with the demands of marriage and motherhood with the purpose of understanding how the lives of educated women with global work experiences and diverse cultural backgrounds are changing rapidly to keep up with the demands of work in professional settings. Creswell (2009) described phenomenological study as "the meaning for several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 57).

Research Questions

Three primary research questions guided this study and were informed by the study's primary goal: to identify effective strategies and provide support for females who seek work-life integration strategies and flexible work options as they consider career decisions in corporate settings:

1.   What experiences (relationships, professional, and personal) as well as motivational factors shape the life course of women and impact *work-life flexibility* decisions?

2.   What similarities and differences exist, if any, between women who opted for a flexible schedule and those who chose not to pursue flexible options?

3.   What are the relationships between influencers and career goals related to flexible work decisions (i.e., "What influenced you to make the decision?")

Significance of the Topic

The multifaceted career woman of today is different from the historical framework for an ideal worker. Much research focuses on the dual roles of women, the impact of working mothers on the experiences of children, marital status, mentoring relationships, as well as cultural norms, family status, and many others. Other research, which will be explored more in depth in Chapter 2, focuses on women leaving their full-time careers to spend more time raising their children and families (Belkin, 2003; Warner, 2005). While many studies have provided data on why women opt out, only a few have used a specific framework to share the personal stories of diverse women in professional settings to highlight their experiences. This study will explore the narratives of women's lives, as they juggle their work activities with the demands of life outside of work.

The knowledge gained from the study and the narratives may be used to enhance the experiences of other women who are seeking tips on finding the right balance for themselves. Through the findings, researchers can use these findings to create resources to help organizations generate policies and practices to enhance the experiences of female employees. A work environment that leverages these policies and resources could become a best place to work and attract top talent.

Key Definitions

For this study, a definition of work-life flexibility is necessary. This phrase is also referred to as *work/life integration* or *work/life balance* in the literature. These definitions were taken from research articles obtained throughout the study, including Giele, and Belkin.

Work-life flexibility. Work-life flexibility is the practice of providing initiatives designed to create a more flexible, supportive work environment, enabling employees to focus on work tasks while at work. It includes making the culture more supportive, adding programs to meet life event needs, ensuring that policies give employees as much control as possible over their lives, and using flexible work practices as a strategy to meet the dual agenda--the needs of both business and employees (Harrington, 2007).

In analyzing the narratives and other qualitative data, the life story method (Giele, 2002) will be used. The following six definitions derive from the life course method and will be helpful.

Identity. Being different versus conventional - is associated with a person's location in time, space, and cultural milieu (Giele, 2002)

Relationship. Egalitarian versus deferent - shaped by social networks and loyalties

Motivation. Achievement versus nurturance - reflects the individual's goals and motivation

Adaptive. Innovative versus traditional - sums up the accommodations and changes how a person has learned to negotiate while living through changing conditions and life transitions

Human agency. Human agency relates the human being as actor on the larger life stage of society within the world (Giele, 2002).

Unconscious bias. Unconscious bias the science of how the human brain jumps to conclusions. It applies to how humans judge and perceive others based on their own frame of reference, background, and experience (Binaji & Greenwald 2013).

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Key Assumptions

It is assumed that the narratives explored in this study will create lessons, resources, and opportunities to create greater awareness. Additionally, women sharing their stories of overcoming obstacles and growing while working flexibly may assist other women as they make career changes and shifts in their own lives.

Limitations of the Study

The focus of the study is on women specifically, and preferably women who are all currently in flexible work arrangements or who currently have some kind of agreement with their employers. The study is not for entrepreneurs or people in work from home type of roles, but rather, jobs that traditionally have been in an office setting with alternative arrangements. The sample size will be critical in understanding effective strategies and life perspectives.

Summary

This study explores the motivations, career decisions, and mentoring experienced by women using flexible work practices, and shares their stories and life experiences through their own personal narratives. As women face many obstacles in corporate settings related to climbing the corporate ladder and the glass ceiling, and at the same time, deal with families, relationships outside of work, aging parents, as well as their well-being, it was important to identify resources and tools for managers and leaders to help them navigate a flexible work culture. Chapter 1 introduced the study, problem to be solved, the purpose of the study, and introduced the life purpose method. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on work-life integration, the history of women in the workplace as well as flexible work options for women. Chapter 3 describes the life course methodology and includes the research design, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis, as well as analysis and selection of the sample. Chapter 4 presents the findings on the different experiences and motivational factors women experience when making

decisions about work life integration. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings and

conclusion from the study.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature and Research

Historical Background and Context

Per the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (2012), over 70% of moms are in the workforce. They are taking on the roles of mommy and provider in greater numbers than ever before. This new era of dual-career families and single-parent families introduces a fresh set of demands for the women and men who seek to work while raising a family. A significant amount of pressure is placed on families to choose between work and family life, rather than equipping them to pursue both simultaneously. While there are many articles and data pointing towards the advantages or disadvantages of working women, few studies analyze how women can succeed at work-life integration (Nisen, 2013). This study will explore strategies that can be utilized to respond to the dual roles in women's lives.

Despite significant advances in technology and medicine over the past century, the advancement of women's rights is arguably the most impactful to the plight for human rights (Loutfi, 2001). In the United States, the initial positioning on women's rights, connected with political views on anti-slavery, were taken under the leadership of Elizabeth Stanton in 1848. This stance was brought forth at a National convention of Women's Rights, and later supported further by Lucy Stone, in 1850, another early activist. Both groups formed together to later connect with Susan B. Anthony who authored and proposed a right-to-vote amendment to the United States Constitution in 1863 (Cockburn, 2007).

Over the course of the next 50 years, women's suffrage workers and supporters spent countless hours educating the public on the importance of women's suffrage. Suffrage workers circulated petitions as well as lobbied for Congress to pass a Constitutional law to enfranchise women. Many politicians did not give these workers a voice and gave very little attention to this movement. Therefore, over time, women began to recognize that in order to accelerate their

progress, they needed to win the right to vote. For this reason, and at the turn of the century, the women's suffrage movement became one of the largest movements of its time (Watts, 2010).

During this time, a militant feminist trend emerged, and studies on feminism came to the forefront, such as *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 1953) and *The Feminist Mystique* (Friedan, 1963/2010). Friedan touched on concepts that many mothers and housewives were grappling with at the time: is there more to life than dropping off kids at school, cooking meals, and cleaning the house? Friedan interviewed many women who mentioned feeling empty, incomplete, and useless. Her essay, "Women Are People, Too!," published in a *Good Housekeeping,* emphasized the notion of women needing to be self-fulfilled (Friedan, 1960/2010). She went on to discuss how women cannot live through their husbands and kids and must discover their own values and self-worth. "Truly feminine women turn their back on careers, higher education, political rights and the opportunity to shape the major decisions of society for which the old-fashioned feminist fought" (Friedan, 1960/2010, para. 3). The article described that a woman may have lived half of her life before she listened to her inner voice that says it is ok to desire more outside of being a wife and mother. In many cases, during these times, women had no model to follow. Many women had not yet entered the workforce, and the model of the time was the maid or homemaker on television. Thus, asking the right questions, just to begin the search of self-discovery was a difficult exercise for women of this era. The *Good Housekeeping* article struck a cord with many women with both positive and negative responses. Some were big proponents of Friedan's sponsorship of women finding their own voices, and others defended housework because it did not require much thinking. Interestingly, this same sentiment is often discussed in current literature. Far from urging women to reject home and family, the essay called for women to be "complete people". Betty Friedan asked "why

should a woman's fulfillment be the same as a man's? Or why should it be like that of any other woman?" (Friedan, 2010, para 9).

During these times, women allowed other people to identify their identities. Whether it was educators dictating to women the potential for a career, or parents setting expectations of their daughter's potential. As the women's liberation movement began to deteriorate in the 1980s, Carol Hanisch, another feminist and author of *The Critique of the Miss America Protest* reflected on the aftermath of the feminist movement. She summated that the idea of a utopian, non-authoritarian structure where all women participated led to frustration and a lack of leadership and direction. She proposed that the liberation movement lost the liberation, which was the biggest freedom they were striving for. There were many essays and studies to depict all of the varying perspectives on the differences between women and their plight for liberation compared to the experiences of men (Hanisch, 1968).

Women fought for everything from their right not to symbolize beauty or sex objects to reproductive and political rights. Many women were overly obsessed with their body images and sizes and were often attached to the images of beauty and roles of caregivers and homemakers that they saw advertised on television and in print ads. However, they were beginning to question what they were seeing and spoke out very bravely on the role of the woman and the image of beauty (Echols, 1994). The Civil Rights Movement was happening concurrently during this time, and it provided women with the courage and commitment they needed to speak out and seek attention for a good cause. Women of the 1960s fought diligently toward basic civil rights that society denied them. Child care was another issue of the 1960s. Women were hesitant to leave their children at home to pursue careers outside of the home. They began to get bolder and leave the home for support networks and meetings to bond with other women who also wanted to venture out and begin their own businesses. Society believed "a woman could stay at home or

she could be a career woman but it was impossible to do both" (Rossi, 1973, p. 517). Rossi also concluded that if a woman was to get pregnant while she was working, she should never have more than two children. She proclaimed, "Child care was the initial step to a breakdown in society's view that the sole responsibility rested with the woman" (Deckard, 1979, p. 419). Eventually, career women tried to garner the support of homemakers, but there was a notion that any real participation in these movements meant that women were man haters. Housewives began to see that they could have an impact on women's liberation after Angela Davis, Gloria Steinem, and Simone de Beauvoir got involved with furthering women's rights.

Frequently, women only saw women in roles characterized by teachers, homemakers, mothers, and wives. Friedan's writings began to characterize the American housewife, specifically the well-educated, middle class suburban one. Collins (2009) explains, "the wife is absolutely right to feel dissatisfied....women were duped into believing that homemaking was their destiny, by gushy articles in women's magazines" (p. 59). The last area where significant change was felt in this era was in the workplace. There were no women CEOs, doctors, lawyers, firefighters, or scientists. When the economy did expand, women started to work for 60% less than what men were earning for similar roles.

Even employers assumed that once employed, a young female college-educated worker would only stay for a few years and then opt to become a housewife after finding a husband. Employers would offer up an over-engineered and glamorous short-term opportunity that would likely end long before the woman would begin to consider things like a higher salary or a retirement plan (Collins, 2009). Many women who took on part-time and full-time work would often hide it from society to ensure her husband felt masculine and that he was the only breadwinner.

Media also played a large role in how women were depicted and helped to shape how men viewed women both in the home and in the workplace. In the 1960s, there was a show on television entitled, *Mr. Novak*. Betty Friedan was curious about this and asked the producer why there could not be a female lead in this television show. The producer's response was that for this to be a drama there must be action and conflict. For a woman to make decisions and to triumph over anything would be unpleasant, dominant, and masculine (Collins, 2009). Interestingly, in 2014, the same conversation of women being too masculine is still at the forefront of the gender agenda.

Per the Center for Talent Innovation, 46% of women in the United States who are in science, engineering, and math fields believe senior management more readily sees men as "leadership material" (Hewlett & Sherbin, 2014, p. V). Per their *Executive Presence* research, the top careers, often elude women because of their lack of Executive Presence (Hewlett, 2013). One question to consider is who is providing the definition of this elusive quality and if it is being defined by those more prominent roles, then "will women ever have a chance to succeed in settings where playing the dual role, and 'having it all' is equivalent to being successful?" (p. 61).

Feminist Theories

Gender difference theories look to the unique characteristics of men as compared to women and also their respective values (Thompson, 2003). Evaluating each person as an individual and considering their gender helped to alleviate the gender bias and inequality issues that existed over the last several decades. This process could be applied within organizational structures to alter their institutional biases. It would also require women to be a visible part of the system to make a structural shift towards gender equality. One of the most popular theories is the "feminist standpoint theory" originally described by Dorothy Smith, who graduated with her doctoral

degree in Sociology from UC Berkeley. While Smith first described the standpoint theory, it was traced to Sandra Harding (1986) who based her reading of feminist theorists to Dorothy Smith's work. The theory can be described as the feminist critique beyond the strictly empirical one of claiming a special privilege for women's knowledge and stressing that knowledge is always rooted in a specific position, and that women are privileged epistemologically by being members of an oppressed group. The many inequalities faced by women began to be examined and scrutinized by theorists, such as Marx and Weber. "The phenomenon created its own version of domination, by shifting attention almost exclusively to one particular dimension of human social life—the masculine-dominated macro-level public sphere—at the expense of another (the world of women)" (Appelrouth & Edles, 2010, p. 561). Smith (2005) goes on to argue,

> 1) No one can have complete objective knowledge and 2) no two people can have the same standpoint and 3) we must not take the standpoint from which we speak for granted. Our everyday experience should serve as a point of entry, for investigation. (as cited in Appelrouth & Edles, 2010, p. 319)

Smith went on to make the point that the failure of sociologists to recognize the viewpoints from which they saw the world, left them unaware of their biases inherent to their role, but also framed sociology as a masculine sociology. By focusing on areas where women have been systemically excluded, such as paid jobs outside of the home, and ignoring children, household labor, sociology served as a method of alienating women from their own lives (Seidman, 1994).

As girls grow into adolescence, they may lose the belief that they can succeed. This change in outlook does not regularly occur in boys. The phenomenon that Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (2001) described were in relation to the subject of math. For a long time, math has been noted as a subject that boys master more strongly than girls. Over time, these girls lose the belief in themselves and their grades start to fall, almost becoming

a self-fulfilling prophecy. If it is believed that failure is the only option, it has the tendency to become the result. A recent study has shown that as girls are now succeeding at math and science it is a positive for both genders (Andreescu, Gallian, Kane, & Mertz, 2008). Girls who have this experience need to be able to regain self-confidence to accomplish what they set out to do.

Gender difference theories look to the unique characteristics of men as compared to women and analyze the values of each (Thompson, 2003). Evaluating each person as an individual while considering their gender helps to alleviate the gender bias and inequality issues. This process could also be integrated into an organizational structure to modify their processes and systems. For this to be successful, it would require women to become a more visible part of the system, which would result in a paradigm shift towards increased gender equality.

Today, sociologists and supporters of gender theory call the ideology that subconscious minds have filters by which humans categorize information, based on their own lenses, or experiences, *unconscious bias*. As Smith (2005) alluded, humans experience life based on their own vantage point, and it makes it very challenging to make decisions about people when they are not able to see something from someone else's perspective. Common sense tells us if a woman goes out on maternity leave, she will not want to return to work, working the same amount of hours she was working prior to her leave. It may also tell us that she may not be able to travel and may have to take on light duties. However, we must be careful not to make assumptions and let our biases shape these decisions without asking the right questions.

Women in the home. In the 1950s and 1960s, a typical woman, married at 20 had three children and completed her family before she was 30 (Friedan, 1963/2010). Collins (2009) reports, "'Whether one finds it richly rewarding or frustrating, there is one trouble with motherhood as a way of life. It does not last very long,' wrote the Editors of Harpers in a special

issue on American women in 1962" (p. 55). This time period was referred to as the lonely years. The average housewife had 45 years of life left to live after their last child entered school. In a 1960's Redbook magazine article "Why Some Mothers Feel Trapped," an author described sentiments similar to Friedan's.. The article elicited responses from over 24,000 women. The topic of women being in the home became more and more widespread as literature continued to cover magazines on this topic. Being a housewife, but desiring a sense of self-worth was a dominant feeling across all women, wanting it all, believing there was more to life, and trying to decipher whether work and home could co-exist was the biggest topic amongst women, sociologists, and American businesses of this era.

Giele (2008) describes the dual-career family as becoming the norm in which both husbands and wives are working. The workplace composition is changing and the division of family labor is changing. There are a few institutionalized norms and policies to support two earner families in managing their work and domestic responsibilities. Although women have worked for several decades, in most instances they did not pursue a career (an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life with opportunities for progress). With higher levels of education being obtained by women, as well as ambitious career goals, more women today are looking to combine work and family responsibilities.

Women in Education

When Harvard opened its door in 1636, it would be another 200 years before a college admitted a woman. Women did not start to enroll in college at the same rate as men until as late as 1980. Teaching was a common profession that women went into because it was very easy to navigate and widely accepted as an appropriate profession for women. Women could work outside of the home but still get home in time to take care of the children and the home, and prepare meals for their working husbands.

The male President of Radcliffe college (all women at the time) told the incoming freshmen that their college educations would "prepare them to be splendid wives and mothers and their reward might be to marry Harvard men" (Collins, 2009, p. 57). During this era, there was much debate regarding the emasculation of men who had to labor at dulling jobs only to return home to a demanding wife who had spent the whole day homemaking. Ethnicity even played a role, as a reference to black women marrying doctors and demanding furs, expensive homes, and diamonds was mentioned by sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier (Friedan, 1963, p. 34). Whereas some women were looking to get into the working world, others were enjoying being "kept" and living a fancy lifestyle.

The difference in acceptable gender roles serves as a powerful reminder of the desire for systemic change both at work and at home. It meant that women and men had to redefine and change the narrative for what success looked like at home and work as well as in the community. If women were to feel complete, they would need to discover meaningful careers, gain respect, understand their goals, and perhaps make some compromises. Some of these compromises would include whether or not to have a child, whether or not to marry, considering full time work versus part-time during child rearing, as well as how long to stay out of work after a maternity leave. These compromises, if not managed per the expectations set by corporate culture and senior leadership, could have a detrimental impact on the career trajectory of women in the workplace (Hewlett et al., 2010).

Women in the workplace. In the 1970s, women's graduate salaries were significantly lower than those of men ($5400 compared to $4689) potentially because so many women were going into teaching. In 1960, women accounted for approximately 6% of American doctors, 3% of lawyers, and a staggering less than 1% of engineers. Those who did break into the male-dominated professions were channeled into low profile specialties related to their gender. As of

late 1970, a survey of women under 45 who had been or were currently married found that 80 %

believed "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside of the home

and the woman takes care of the home and family" (Watts, 2010, p. 197).

"Most little girls grew up without ever seeing a female doctor, lawyer, police officer, or

bus driver" (Collins, 2009, p. 11). A student who attended UC Berkeley for four years in the

1960s recalled never seeing a female professor. Berkeley was known as "one of the highest

institutions for learning in the world" (Collins, 2009, p. 12). "If a young woman expressed an

interest in a career outside the traditional teacher/nurse/secretary, her mentors carefully

shepherded her back to the proper path" (Collins, 2009, p.12). Women stood behind cash

registers in stores, cleaned homes, and were receptionists and bookkeepers often part-time. If

they were professional workers, they held low paying jobs that had been well-defined as

appropriately suited for women, like teachers, nurses, or librarians.

Gender and Organizational Culture

Identity has an impact on all aspects of life. The roles that men and women play at home

also are brought to the office. The astounding underrepresentation of women in top positions

reinforces entrenched beliefs, promotes and supports men's bids for top leadership positions, and

maintains the status quo (Mercer, 2011).

The images of corporate leaders are male. Top leadership magazines, such as *Fortune*,

Fast Money, and others, will 9 times of out 10, depict the image of a male when it comes time to

discuss leadership. Finally, the percentage of women in senior management has fallen 4% on the

last decade (Ibarra & Ely, 2013). These factors impact gender roles and the roles woman are

assigned in work settings. Oftentimes, male leaders ask women to take notes or to set up

meetings. These gender nuances and lack of female role models also impacts her perspective on

home life and work life. A single mother has a different perspective than that of a male head of

household with a supportive wife. Each one also will process their roles differently as well as may pursue different career paths.

Cochran (2006) stated, "Motivations are affected by individual differences; personal and professional relationships; organizational values, needs; personal values, and satisfaction of senior members of the department" (p. 76). This gives a picture of how experiences from all aspects of life impact commitment to work and relational styles. Employees bring their identities and personalities to the workplace, and it is important for managers and leaders to understand the needs of the employees to ensure high productivity. Valuing employees for their authenticity can have a tremendous impact on their ability to engage with other employees, build deep friendships and relationships, and thus, enhance productivity.

Some male professionals may lack the commitment needed to create a gender-balanced environment in the professional work setting. Unconscious bias and neuroscience reports that humans tend to hire people that look like ourselves. It is also known as *like me* or *affinity bias*. Given that white males dominate leadership roles in Fortune 1000 organizations and women primarily dominate roles as caregivers, nurses, and teachers, the struggle for gender balance, pay equity, and work life integration is a topic that remains of utmost importance as it pertains to ensuring equity and fairness as women make decisions about how to care for their families and maintain a satisfying career (Binaji & Greenwald, 2013).

Unconscious bias has become an increasingly important topic when it comes to gender and equality. So much so, that organizations are now requiring all their leadership personnel to go through two hours of training on the topic to help raise awareness of the negative effects it can have on decisions made about people and talent. The traditional paradigm generally has assumed that patterns of discriminatory behavior in organizations are conscious and that people who are aware of the negative impact of assumptions will inevitably do the right thing, and those

who do not cause bias. Thus, an us vs them and a good and bad person construct has developed within the function of diversity: a belief that good people are not biased, but inclusive, and that bad people are the biased ones (Ross, 2008).

One of the central functions of the work of diversity and inclusion of professionals, almost since its inception of the first corporate diversity efforts, has been to find the "bad people" and fix them to eradicate bias. There is good reason for this. If an inclusive society is to be built and if a business is going to build cultures in which everybody can access to their fair pathway to success, it clearly is not consistent for some to be judged based on their ethnicities or likenesses of a particular group. Driven by this desire to combat inequities, diversity leaders and human resources professionals have worked hard through societal measures, like human and equality efforts, to both reduce and eliminate hidden bias. They have given time and attention to who "gets" diversity, without understanding that to an extent, their approaches have been self-serving. "If they were as (wise, noble, righteous, good, etc.) as us, then they would 'get it' like we do!" (Ross, 2008, p. 2). In many cases, this is based on the idea that people choose to treat someone unjustly due to underlying negative perceptions toward some groups or feelings of superiority about the group they belong to. Still, it could be, more times than not, people have preferences that discriminate against one group and thus, are in favor of another, without even being cognizant of it. Perhaps even more strikingly, these biases work against their own conscious beliefs to make they believe that they are being fair in how they treat and make decisions about people. Also, clear examples of conscious bias and discrimination still exist, whether in broader societal examples like the recent incidents in Ferguson, New York media commercials subjecting women to sexual objects or specific organizational examples. For example, a woman may go on maternity leave and decide that she is ready to come back into the workplace at a reduced work schedule for the first few months as she gets settled and begins to

juggle motherhood and working parent. In some cases, leasers who are making decisions about this new mother's career have already decided to remove her from clients, make her job a bit easier to manage and not offer challenging assignments without discussing these changes with the woman (Binaji & Greenwald, 2013). Thus, the opportunity for the woman to grow, and achieve accomplishments that would warrant a promotion or future growth are thwarted and would even impact her ability to receive a higher performance rating. These small biases that manifest themselves in different ways in the workplace adversely impact the careers of women and multicultural workers more than any other population. Work-life flexibility can influence a culture and shift the dynamics in an organization if everyone believes in it, and understands how to manage it (Hyun, 2014).

Work-life Flexibility/Work-life Integration

As women are forced to choose between career and family obligations, a vicious cycle ensues. With every request for flexible work arrangements, every promotion passed up because it might involve an onerous travel schedule, or every high-profile assignment avoided because it would require a single-minded focus, the perception grows that women are less committed to their work (Hewlett et al., 2010). Thirty-eight percent of women who have never off-ramped describe themselves as very ambitious; only one-third of women who off-ramped say the same. Circumstances often collude to shrink a woman's ambition, however, and diminished ambition often precedes her decision to off-ramp. Women often cut back their career goals in response to a "push" from their workplace rather than a "pull" from outside forces.

Recently, Melissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo, received a lot of backlash for disrupting an existing "work from home" policy and requiring the entire company to report into the office each day. Her desire was to increase innovation and collaboration, and she felt that this could be done best by having everyone working together, organically holding water cooler conversations

(Sandberg, 2013, p. 45). Mayer's stance, the increased conversations on work-life flexibility in the workplace (for both men and women), as well as the vast amount of research that indicates workers who work remotely and flexibly get more done, but may often not receive promotions at the rates of those that are in the office every day, raises the questions: What are the experiences of flexible workers? Are women and men using these arrangements equitably? Are there abundant workplace practices in each industry and company to allow men and women to support their personal and professional lives?

Given the corporate landscape today and women being very prominent in the workplace and taking on very senior leadership roles, gender roles have shifted and workplace flexibility has taken on a new meaning. Men are now full-time fathers and in many cases sharing the bulk of the child rearing while their powerful wives serve as the breadwinners for the family (J. Mackey, personal communication January 11, 2010). Peck (2015) writes, "The attitude underlines a lingering, under-discussed issue in the fraught world of parenting — the wide difference between what's expected of mothers and fathers" (para. 5). She referred to it as the *expectation gap*. For example, there is an expectation that the mother will get up in the middle of the night with the baby, but a surprise when the father does it, and it is often celebrated. Women often are plagued with guilt for not meeting the expectations of what society feels they should be doing. A recent survey of parents who work more than 20 hours a week, found on https://today.yougov.com/ in conjunction with *The Huffington Post*, reported that 75% of men and 75% of women said they feel occasionally guilty about not spending more time with family. The survey goes on to confirm that neither gender feel guilty about spending too little time at work. Rebecca Livingstone of Cornell University cites, "It is harder for women to balance work and family because the expectations are different" (Peck, 2015, para. 15). It is not a skill set issue

but more of a mindset issue. "'If you go to a house and it's wreck, you'll judge the woman, says Livingstone" (Peck, 2015, para. 20).

The increasing importance of women as breadwinners has done little to equalize the role that women play in the home. Even when they are working full-time and earning more than their spouses or partners, most women are still responsible for more than half of the household chores and child care in their homes (Hewlett et al., 2010).

Organizations are modifying maternity leave policies, enhancing work from home guidance, and introducing alternative ways employees can take advantage of flexible work practices. In the past, these were practices leveraged more by women and that phenomenon is shifting towards men. Men are requiring paternity leave and wanting to break up the time they are given so they can spend time with their newborn baby but also take some additional time in the first two months of their newborns' lives (Lewis, Gambles, & Rapoport, 2007).

Technological advances allow for greater mobility and a virtual working environment. In corporate settings, office space is often recalibrated in an effort for companies to close offices and or take advantage of allowing individuals to share space to reduce costs. For example, one person may come in on Tuesday and Thursday and another may come into the office on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Other organizations are seeing more job sharing and reduced schedules to allow for pursuing higher education or begin to dial down to prepare for retirement (Tanden & Weinberg, 2014).

A human capital professional services organization, recently introduced a concept called, "Bring Your Own Device to Work," that allows employees to access their work email and important work applications from their tablets and personal cell phones. This practice enables employees to have more flexibility where work gets done and how work gets done (Lewis et al., 2007). Technology will continue to enhance the experience of remote workers and enable

women to have more options when they desire to work flexibly (Hyun, 2014). Providing employees with guidelines on work products, such as home phones, mobile products, printers, scanners, and other audio and video conferencing technology, makes it easy for women and men to be productive and effective in home working situations.

Due to these technological advances, managers are needing to learn more about working in virtual environments where workers are heard but not seen. For this reason, some organizations have started to embed "managing a virtual team" courses into management and leadership training to better prepare for a culture of virtual workers (J Channing, personal communicatio, May 2012). Helping leaders understand the competencies required to work virtually and lead women who are on formal arrangements will become more and more critical as more companies employ these policies.

There are several implications to be seen and not heard. One unconscious bias already built into the idea of workplace flexibility is the notion that more women than men need flexibility and work reduced hours and part time due to being primary child-care providers.

The implications for women on the career trajectory include the potential to miss out on advancement opportunities and assumptions made about the amount of work that can be assumed after returning from a maternity leave. The implications of men are very little compared to women; for women, there is a higher price because of assumptions made about how much time women focus on family. Choosing a flexible work environment, given women are already starting from behind the curve when it compares to men, can be difficult in the corporate work environment. Men, on the other hand, once did not have a desire for flexibility, but there has been a shift in the last decade regarding their needs.

In recent history, there was public admonishment of baseball great, Dan Murphy, for missing opening day to be with his wife to celebrate the day of his first-born child's birth, which

brought more attention to the need for paternity leave for men (Feloni, 2014). More recently, MongoDB's former CEO, Max Schireson, resigned from his position stating difficulties in managing his dual career as father and CEO. Women in leadership roles have been scrutinized heavily for similar practices, but we heard very little from this male CEO who stepped down to focus more on the needs of his family. Schireson said to the Huffington post, "A few months ago, I decided the only way to balance was by stepping back from my job" (Kaufman, 2014, para. 11).

In a recent survey from *Working Mother Magazine*, 8 in 10 men responded that they feel comfortable using flexibility while only 26% say their employers can support it (Working Mother, 2014). In this survey, men who worked from home two days per week stated that they had an effective support network. They went on to say that the ability to use flexibility enhanced their productivity, morale, and loyalty. Seeing men report the benefits of flexibility is new and exciting, says the director of the study, Jennifer Owens (Working Mother, 2014). Ninety-nine percent of the men surveyed believe that companies should offer paid paternity leave for men; similarly, 99% of men surveyed had the desire to have more control over their overnight travel and wanted to create the norm of being home at least three to four nights a week with family. In the 1990s when women were leaving the workforce at a higher rate than men, many companies began to work towards ensuring a flexible work culture by establishing work policies and helping leaders understand how to manage virtual workers (Working Mother, 2014). Given the well-known statistic that it cost between one and a half to two times the salary to replace someone, it only makes sense to provide flexibility and all the resources that go with it to enable employees to achieve their personal needs as well as their professional needs. It also makes for better customer/client relationships when people feel whole and well to do so.

Arthur, Inkson, and Pringle (1999) suggest that the body of work concerning career and life management where individuals have control over career fulfillment through an individual agency is quite rare for women. The pursuit of personal meaning does not conceptualize the individual woman in the context of a full life. This creates big challenges for women who may be inhibited by family and personal life matters that may be outside of their control. While men may also enjoy greater flexibility in their working lives, it may not be as needed or valued if they have a stay-at-home spouse.

Women vs. Men

Per a recent survey conducted by the Center for Talent Innovation,

The higher the salary, the greater the time demands. In 2009, a woman earning $150,000 or more annually is working a full 14 hours per week more than a woman earning $50,000 or less. Furthermore, at all levels—but especially in the higher salary brackets— women work just as hard, if not harder, than their male counterparts. (Hewlett et al., 2010, p. 16)

Some male professionals in executive leadership roles may not have a desire to create a gender-balanced environment. Making a cultural change involves all aspects of an organization; this would have a large systemic impact that would alter the status quo and challenge male privilege. The positive impact might lead to more women in executive leadership causing some men in executive leadership to fear being left behind or fear their sense of power is being removed. The system in place since the creation of most business organizations has worked to ensure that the current male executive leadership continues to lead; a systemic change, such as equality, would alter that reality. Promoting or hiring more female leaders can help the culture shift by demonstrating the value of female managers and employees in the organization. The presence of women in executive leadership gives a voice to the female experience and identity.

Such influence may increase morale, encourage younger women to apply for more senior level roles, and create value and a need for female leadership in the workplace.

Ny and Feldman (2008) suggest that strong situational demands to work hours should be related to one's identity (work identity or family identity). Working longer hours is usually consistent with a strong work identity and working fewer hours is more consistent with a family identity. However, their findings indicate that although work hours are discretionary for most professionals, individuals perceived that long work hours are required and therefore, not related to their sense of identity. The decision of women (and men) to work longer or shorter number of hours has implications for work and family lives (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006).

Multiple roles concerning family and work can be satisfying, but most times it is related to conflict, stress, and overload in work. Pleck (1977) discussed the term family to work spillage and that spillage is more apparent to women than it is for men. The family and work environment are the two main factors of problems for the working mother. Rothbard (2001) noted that there are also gender inequalities in every society between the family and work collaboration.

The burden of family responsibilities in many households weighs on the woman due to the values and norms of the perception of women in society and the workforce. The sex-roles of the man and woman come into play here as well. There is no equal distribution on the domestic responsibility. There is an expectation that the women will always commit to their families first and their careers second. This will continue to hinder career advancements for the women. Therefore, women are suffering in career advancement opportunities (Bharat, 2003).

Women managers experience more stress than men managers due to childbearing and conflicts with their partners in the household. Women are obligated to perform most of the household duties that include taking care of the children, elderly family, and other dependents. They have multiple roles within the household that add to their stress (Crosby, 1987). These

working mothers bear the responsibility of childbearing. In most households, women compromise their work and schedules to meet the requirements of being a mom. There are many pressures within the family and most of the responsibility is placed on the women (Falkenberg & Monachello, 1990; Wajcman, 1981).

Many women eventually develop a guilt complex when they have small children because there are no well-equipped areas of day care near them. This creates stress at work and that creates another role conflict.

Stone (2007) wrote in detail about the *Opt-Out Revolution*, which concerned work-life integration and why women are opting out. Stone stated that some of the reasons why women leave the work force have nothing to do with the choice of being home with their children. The reason is that flexibility in the workplace is not provided to them to make the choice of being the employee and the mother. These stay at home moms make a choice and that choice is being a stay-at-home mom. When women decide to work and not completely leave the workforce and work part-time, many of them are working full-time, and it is not successful. Many women are still working full-time, so they decide to leave because they are working the same amount of hours for less.

Paternity leave policies for men have been studied to better understand various ways to offer benefits to men who are new fathers or wish to also spend time with their children. A recent online study was conducted by Ernst and Young to understand the attitudes of fathers concerning time off and parental leave (Harrington, 2014). Over 1,000 working fathers participated and the results were interesting. Sixty-seven fathers had access to parental leaves, and over 60% said it was extremely important for a company to offer paternity leave if they were to consider a new company. The study went on to show that men often feel guilty, just as women do, and often cannot find the time to bond with their young children. Most of the men surveyed expressed an

intense desire to be equal caregivers. Undoubtedly, men's aspirations and current reality end up not being in alignment. When fathers are deciding how much time to take off, in addition to the amount of leave they have, many fathers admitted to have a conflict between their desires to be good co-parent, with the 40% who admitted that the pressures at work weighed on them heavily. Other factors they considered were the employment time of the spouse, the amount of family and other resources available, as well as the stigma associated with taking time off in their respective organizations. Interestingly, 50% of the fathers indicated that they performed some type of work for their employers while on leave (Ross Phillips, 2004).

The Opt-Out Revolution is correlated to what is called the leaky pipeline problem. The amount of time that women are out of the workforce also affects them when they try to return to the workforce. On average, women's annual salary decreases by 30% when they leave the workforce. The average amount of years they leave their careers is two to three years. These interruptions in women's careers creates fewer years of work experience, and it ultimately creates a gender gap in the field. The male population is growing within their field, gaining experience year after year, while women are not. Once women decide to return to their professions, their salaries significantly are lower than their male counterparts. Stone (2007) made an analogy to the yellow light phenomenon that relates to the leaky pipeline problem:

> Common knowledge has it that women and men see traffic lights differently. When the light changes to yellow, women treat it as a caution to put on the brakes, men as a signal to floor it. Regarding their careers, children and family are the yellow light, women slow down and men speed up. The so-called 'clockwork of male careers' explains some of this gender difference. The trajectories of the professions, historically male-dominated, are structured per the rhythms and timing of men's lives. The period of career establishment

and growth corresponds to what are for women the prime childbearing and rearing years.

(p. 67)

The yellow light analogy also can be a result of internal pressures within a marriage. This becomes a reflection of the power that men have over women and relates to the problem of women negotiating between careers and their children. When stay-at-home moms decide to go back to work, they are still expected to partake in most household activities. This is called the women's second shift because they are still taking over the bulk of the childbearing and housekeeping responsibilities. This also correlates with the cultural underpinnings of society and why this second shift exists. These norms are strongly ingrained in many different cultures.

Stone (2007) pointed out that women lose income when they leave the workforce, yet many companies lose money as well. The turnover that is created because of stay at home moms is very expensive for employers. Employers are determined to diversify their workplace, and they want to promote women advancement within the company, but there are financial setbacks that can hinder it.

Stone (2007) wrote that women who are in professions of high rank and managerial positions are better able to combine work and motherhood than women in other positions. They can afford child care and their employees are much more supportive in creating a work life integration. Women working with successful corporations, government entities, and law firms are receiving more help in childbearing. They can take advantage of family-friendly work environments and their positions allow for autonomy.

For some women, the idea of opting out is a matter of choice to continue in their careers or leave them, yet for many women, some of the reasons they decide to leave the workforce has nothing to do with choice; rather, it is because of family pressures and obligations.

Work-Life Integration and Commitment to the Workplace

Work-life integration is altered when commitment in the workplace is not present. Work-life imbalances emerge due to a lack of time and support from organizations to allow employees to manage their work and personal commitments. Felfr and Yan (2009) wrote that commitment in the workplace is a key characteristic to understand an organization's culture. When employees are constantly trying to meet the demands of work and life obligations, it may cause stress that usually leads to sickness with employees being absent from work (Sandberg, 2013). There is a need for organizations to understand employees' commitment levels within an organization and the way they work together collectively and individually (Felfr & Yan, 2009).

Face time doesn't equate to commitment, and working flexibly doesn't mean not working hard. In many cases, it is the complete opposite. New research indicates that people who work from home are more productive (Hyun, 2014). This phenomenon is primarily due to the lack of interruptions in most home office environments that exist in work environments. Organizations that operate in open environments with cubicles and open office spaces must deal with noises and others conversations and phones, meetings, etc. Individuals who work from home, usually work in isolation, with reduced sound and control the noise in their environment (Hyun, 2014). Thus, they are better able to create the ideal work environment for them. People who work from home also complain about lack of exposure and loneliness. They are unable to walk down the hall and ask someone to lunch, hear the water cooler conversations, or be seen by leadership. This concern is a critical one for women who work from home or remotely and feel invisible. It becomes even more important for their work to have an impact (Hewlett et al., 2010).

What are the Influencers?

What prompts so many ambitious, highly qualified women to take time out of their careers? There is no simple, one-size-fits-all explanation for why women off-ramp. Career

breaks are, for most, the result of a complex interaction between *pull factors* (centered on family and personal life) and *push factors* (centered on work). There are many influencers that make women decide they would like to work flexibly (Gersick, 2013). Some include the innovation and drive that stem from an entrepreneurial mindset.

Historically, women have felt that they would not be able to realize their dreams for wellness, prosperity, and happy families by staying in corporate America and working for large organizations because the number of women leading large corporations is dismal (Falkenberg & Monachello, 1990). Research cites that women like to see others pave the way, which serves as a motivating factor that women can have it all (Sandberg, 2013). Other influencers include the ability to juggle multiple priorities throughout the day and better control the work environment.

Given that women bear the lion share of childrearing, they often seek work environments that enable them to pick up kids from school, attend sporting events, see them off to school in the morning, or perhaps allow time for caring for an elder parent (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

Women have indicated they can take care of everything from laundry to doctor appointments to meal preparation in between meetings and conference calls while working from home. These chores do not make these workers any less committed. In many cases, they are even more committed and loyal; however, the loyalty is to the flexibility, more so than the organization, according to the findings of research on the topic of the virtual worker (Toppin, 2006). All of these priorities would prove to be very challenging if they needed to be accomplished via an average eight to ten-hour work day in an office setting, not including a commute (Hyun, 2014).

Commute time and stress is another driving force that causes women to seek out alternative work arrangements. Often, the stress of a morning drive or a longer commute time in

the evening makes women want to switch their hours or carpool or find roles that will allow them to consider flexible work options (Falkenberg, Nyfjäll, & Hellgren, 2012).

The most important reason women are motivated to consider alternative/flexible work options is due to children and wanting to spend more time at home and be available for children after school. Many complain about wanting to be available for their after school activities, and watch their kids grow up. In the formative years, kids do not have a great understanding of the roles and responsibilities their parents have in the workplace.

Per a Huffington post article published in January of 2015, which quotes Cheryl Sandberg, "Most women never get that chance: they opt out long before the C-suit over this very concern (they 'leave before they leave…')" (Plumb, 2015, para. 8) Claudia Goldin, a Harvard economist stated, if workplaces had more workplace policies to support women and flexibility, our GDP would be boosted by 9% (Plumb, 2015, para. 10). Women have a lot of financial power and future capabilities to turn the economy around. Women opt out because they do not see role models who look like them rising to the top, and for those that do look like them, they do not emulate the behaviors many women who work from home find pleasing. Many have their children in boarding schools, travel more than 50% of the time, have stay-at-home husbands, or have been driven to divorce (Sandberg, 2013). Additionally, some just do not have the energy to challenge the status quo and try to shatter the glass ceiling yet one more time.

In her study of corporate leadership roles, Wajcman (1981) discovered that several women in leadership roles named childlessness as a prerequisite for a successful leadership career. Additionally, she noted that those who did have children remained work-centered by outsourcing day care and house cleaning services. An alternative strategy she suggested was for women to "choose" to be what Hakim (2000) refers to as adaptors, and work at a level beneath their professional capabilities in roles requiring less skills that did not require high demand, to

combine work and family life. She suggested that there was no other way these two could be achieved.

Organizations more and more are encouraging long hours to the point that Google recently created a new benefit for women that allowed them to freeze their eggs at the expense of the company. While many are touting how exciting it is to have this benefit from the company, others are concerned that it will create more health risks on the back end and encourage women to have children later in life, resulting in health risks and increasing benefit costs (Mary Ann Pearson, personal communication, January 2015).

Organizations need to understand how some cultures working collectively or as an individual can affect the way they communicate with their subordinates. Felfr and Yan (2009) mention three forms of commitment in the workplace which include: (a) affective commitment, (b) continuance commitment, and (c) normative commitment.

Affective commitment can be impacted by a benefit, such as workplace flexibility. When a company grants flexibility to an employee, in turn the employee gives them the same flexibility. One author described it akin to mutual respect (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Individuals' feelings greatly influence the place they work and why they are working there. Most of these individuals are emotionally attached to their workplaces and want to be there. The employee "deal" stipulates that the employee must give to get. An employee becomes more attached to their workplace when they feel like they are getting the same amount they are giving, even though common sense tells us this will not always equal out. Continuance commitment is when an individual is involved in an organization due to force or because it is a means of financial security (Wajcman, 1981). Normative commitment is when individuals are making decisions based on their norms and due to social acceptance. It is when someone's mentors and family members have a strong influence in their decisions in choice of their employment.

Commitment is also tied to engagement. Many women are committed and engaged to their organizations because they meet their best friends in their workplaces and having close friends within their organizations also creates a connection and loyalty to the company (Barnett & Rivers, 1996).

Felfr and Yan (2009) noted that cultural differences can cause different levels of commitment due to motives, values, beliefs, and identities. These researchers conducted a study to understand cultural diversity and to analyze the relationship between individualism and collectivism. Cultural diversity and inclusion places a large part in how corporate organizations look at workplace flexibility in that it is one way to be very inclusive of everyone in the organization. It also plays a large role due to mainstream flexibility focusing more on the needs of women and a connection to maternity leave and part-time workers than the needs of men. Workplace flexibility has adversely impacted ethnic minorities as well.

Given the lack of diverse representation in some organizations, some leaders do not see that there are unwritten rules and different policies that may be granted to those who are more visible than those who are less visible. Some companies have started to conduct interviews and focus groups to understand what differences may exist, if any, for women and diverse employees who want to exercise flexibility versus male workers. Conversations regarding equality come to the forefront in some conversations where flexibility and men come are mentioned- simply, "when men are left out of the conversation about workplace flexibility, counterintuitively we actually hurt women's chances at achieving equality in the workplace"" (Tanden & Weinberger, 2014, para. 5).

Current Trends

While work and family should be balanced, the word balance is problematic for some as it suggests a 50/50 investment. It would imply that something should be given up and replaced

with something else. Additionally, achieving balance might also imply leaving something to tackle something else (Lewis & Cooper, 2005). Balance also suggests that life is separate from work. Current thinking frames the work-life balance conversation in terms of integration or harmonization versus balance, which some think could be 70/30 or 60/40 or unattainable. "Work and family can be mutually reinforcing," writes Lewis and Cooper (2005, p. x). Some companies have started to look at their flexible policies and wondered if they should cut back due to tough times. Others have implemented them but communicated them in a poor way to employees, which has ultimately added to work-family conflict. Despite more organizations having work-life policies, they are not widely accessed. Interestingly, many of these policies involve a lot of time and resources to put together, and then they are soft launched and barely publicized to those who may benefit from its use (Kersey, 2006). The policies when they are accessed are not accessed equally. In one organization, while one female-oriented department felt they understood the various flexibility options, another male-dominated department did not feel the same (Hall & Atkinson, 2006). Thus, they felt that policy make up was very gendered, and why it appears to many organizations to be a "female" problem. Moreover, when men do make requests for flexible options, they are more likely to have their requests rejected (Fagan, 2009). Equally, mothers are three times more likely to ask for flexibility than fathers (Fagan, 2009). The prevailing thought is when people succeed, companies succeed. If there is a family issue, eventually, there is a business issue. The more organizations can do to help their employees succeed in life, the better for the business (Tanden & Weinberger, 2014).

Per the Hewlett et al. (2010) in their study examining why women off-ramp and on-ramp, the decline in off-ramping is likely due to the down economy; 15% of women currently in the workforce would like to off-ramp but cannnot afford to. Sixty-six percent of women have taken a scenic route and switched to a part-time, reduced time, or flex-time schedule to balance work and

family. Women in 2009 were 28% more likely to have a nonworking spouse than they were five years ago.

The reasons that women off-ramp are no less complicated now than they were five years ago. Pull factors, particularly child care, dominate. Nevertheless, push factors emanating from the workplace also play a role in women's decisions to take a break. These push factors have been exacerbated by the Great Recession.

Currently, nearly 40% of working women out-earn their spouses. Driven by a tight economy, women are working longer hours: "49 hours per week, up from 40 hours per week in 2004" (Hewlett et al., 2010, p. 2). The second shift is alive and well: 60% of full-time working women routinely perform more than half of the domestic chores and 56% take charge of child care. Per the American Society of Women Accountants (2011), "Ann Holley, a National Tax Partner at KPMG, states, 'I feel that my opportunities for advancement are based on my qualifications and my accomplishments, not on my gender. I currently work a reduced schedule and still feel that there are numerous opportunities for advancement. I can honestly say that the only limitations on my career that I feel are those that have been self-imposed'" (p. 9).

A lot of other research would leave one to believe that companies who are reporting that they are flexible, really are. Many companies do not offer flexibility to all. Beyond reported increases in alternative arrangements, recent studies show that more employers are cutting back programs that would call for a reduction in hours to manage the care of an aging parent. Employers have also cut back the length of leave to new fathers and adoptive parents and reduced pay given to working mothers on maternity leave. And fewer employers are encouraging supervisors to assess workers' performance by what they accomplish, instead of resorting to measuring face time to evaluate performance (Bernard, 2014).

As organizations and governments continue to progress, the agenda of workplace flexibility, new research, new systems, and new guidance continues to come to the forefront. Senator Mike Lee and Representative Martha Roby are working on new legislation to introduce the Working Families Flexibility Act of 2015. "The Working Families Flexibility Act helps workers handle the constant challenge of work-life integration by allowing private-sector employers to offer individuals who work overtime the option to choose between monetary compensation and complimentary time" (St George News, 2015, para. 2). Again, another vast improvement to assist organizations in dealing with workplace flexibility. Research continues to be conducted in this area.

Work-life Flexibility: Adverse Impact to Relationships

Hall and Atkinson (2009) argue that one way to achieve work life integration is through the discretionary use of work time, which can create a culture of reciprocity. If two individuals connect and discover through their flexible schedules, they can cover for each other; it creates a camaraderie and deeper co-worker relationship. Others argue that work-life policies raise issues of fairness. Who decides who gets flexibility? Is it earned, or is it a benefit? Lewis and Lewis (1997) argue that sometimes these policies benefit one group of people (generally parents) more than non-parents who often resent having to carry heavier workloads and work long hours" and resentment is felt amongst coworkers. Attention has been given to team working and collaboration which often suffer in flexible work environments. Thus, the implications of flexible working on women can be viewed outside of an individual context and more so on an organizational point of view.

Oftentimes, participants for the next big assignment, a leadership program, or nomination to participate in a new coaching or mentoring program are sought out by high-potential lists (Lewis et al., 2007). When employees exercise flexible work options and telecommute,

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frequently, the opportunities to be nominated for such prestigious and visible opportunities become less and less. Those peers who work in an office setting are left to either speak up for their less visible peers, or deal with the added pressures of consistently being the "go to" for prime opportunities. Working flexibly, in this case, is tantamount to give up something to get something else. In many cases, it is difficult to have flexibility and strong peer relationships, and matriculate in one's career at the same pace and rate as those working full time in office settings. This adds to some of the resistance in peer-to-peer relationships. Stone (2007) refers to this as opting out.

The Life Course Method

The life course method is the selected methodology for this research. The concept of life course theory has made time, context, and process dimensions of study, along with the cultural and intergenerational variables, more human (Elder, 1975). Life course has been applied to the interweaving of work careers and family pathways that are subject to cultural changes with future options. Life course is defined as a field of inquiry that provides a framework for research on problem identification and conceptual development that provide insight into the impact of changing societies on developing lives (Elder, 1985).

The field of life course research is evolving and recognizes that powerful influences of women come from past experiences and the experiences of their life partners. The research of Giele and Elder (1999) have helped to shed light on the delayed effects of early experiences on later life patterns. The life course perspective suggests that women may be similar or different in many aspects of their life (age, education, socio-economic status, and race). These similarities and/or differences could make them more interested in juggling a career and family or encourage them to choose between the two. Using the life course approach brings transparency to the

complexities of a woman's life that allows one to develop a systematic approach to analysis of the variables through the narrative story.

This framework contributes significantly to the direction of a life path. These function as requisites of living systems: individuals, social groups, or whole societies. These areas are critical in shaping individuals' adult gender roles described above in Giele (2002). Life course was utilized to elicit a narrative of the key events and particularities of an individual woman's life. It does not grasp the whole of the life history, yet provides information about distinctive themes in one's life. The life story method began with five major questions posed to women who hold leadership roles in multiple professions.

Lee, Kossek, Hall, & Litrico (2011) suggests that life course researchers understand the broad life context as they focus on the changes in human lives. Life course considers not only the individual, but also the couple and the family. These are framed in context with individual action and institutional and structural conditions. This includes the timing and ordering of life events.

Giele (2002, 2008) expanded on the life course theoretical framework to develop a set of factors related to life stories and gender role which she has framed as the life story method. The factors that are critical in shaping individuals' adult gender roles are sense of identity, type of marital relationship, personal drive and motivation, and adaptive style.

Over the last couple of decades, life course theory has been applied to the study of human lives which places the context of the study across the social and behavioral sciences (Elder, 1994). Humans exist within changing societies and have choice making controls over their lives.

This research project proposes a life course research study to better understand the work life integration of women who are in work from home arrangements. To understand the life

course of these women being interviewed, the researcher will ask questions based on the Giele (2008) method. This method includes probing on periods of women's lives that include: early adulthood, childhood and adolescent, current life, and future life. The main goal of this study is to find strategies in work-life integration that will help women who work from home develop effective career management tools and resources to enhance their contributions to their companies and their communities.

The methodology section will go into detail regarding the background of the research questions and the complete research process. In this section, the data sample and analysis unit will be explained. The reader will also be able to understand the instrument and the questions used in the interview process. The strategies behind the data collection and analysis process will also be covered. The validity and reliability of the instrument will be discussed. Lastly, the approval process of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be discussed.

Summary

Studies have proven that women and men experience work-life balance differently, and in spite of men having the desire to carry more of the burden in child rearing, there is still an expectation that women will carry the lion share (Bernard, 2014). Organizations are increasingly assessing their guidance and policies to address both maternity and paternity policies, and the literature suggests that employers of choice are choosing to have generous benefits to attract the best talent (Tanden & Weinberger, 2014).

The gendered perspective, in which choices must be made and the pervasive gendered assumptions in the workplace, are tantamount to understand the implementation of flexible working/work-life integration (Lewis et al., 2007). Many women have had to adapt to the ideal worker model to succeed. Much of the research cites some of the tensions between workers with children and workers without and focuses on the policies. The researcher seeks to unpack the

motivations, relational styles, and influencers of those who have worked from home arrangements and seek to understand the impact on their career trajectory.

Once known for a corporate culture characterized by long hours and high levels of stress, Best Buy, the nation's leading electronics retailer, has been working to develop a completely new approach to work. Per their website, GO ROWE from http://www.gorowe.com beginning in 2002, Jody Thompson and Cali Ressler, two Best Buy human resources managers, began transforming the chain's traditional work culture into what they dubbed a "Results Only Work Environment" (ROWE). Basing performance on output instead of hours, ROWE relies on clear expectations, trust, and focus. Instead of adhering to strict schedules, ROWE participants must attend mandatory meetings but otherwise may work wherever and whenever they want—as long as the work gets done.

Converting to ROWE is roughly a six-month process. The first phase involves leadership training, bringing executives on board, encouraging managers to rethink their concepts of what work means, and helping them explore ways to maintain control of their departments within the bounds of this new model. The second phase focuses on team training, and in the third phase, the group "goes live" for six weeks before gathering for a debriefing. Best Buy has rolled out the program incrementally by department and in phases; by 2007, 3,000 of Best Buy's 4,000 corporate employees (or 80%) had migrated to ROWE. From 2005 to 2007, ROWE teams showed an average increase in productivity of 41%. During the same period, voluntary turnover fell from 12% to 8%, saving Best Buy $16 million annually in attrition costs.

Employees who converted to the ROWE system praise the flexibility it allows and report in surveys that their relationships with family and friends have improved, their loyalty to the company has grown, and they feel more focused and excited about their work. The program has been so successful that it is become an important part of Best Buy's recruiting pitch—and a

real draw for Generation Y workers who want to view their work as something more than just showing up and putting in their time.

Through ROWE, Best Buy hopes to redefine the very nature of retail work itself, and early reports indicate a significant level of success.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

This research project proposed a life course research study to better understand the work life balance of women who are in work from home arrangements. To understand the life course of these women being interviewed, the researcher asked questions based on the Giele (2008) method. This method included; probing on periods of women's lives; early adulthood, childhood and adolescent, current life, and future life. The purpose of this study was to find strategies in work- life integration that will help women who work from home develop effective career management tools and resources to enhance their contributions to their companies and their communities.

The methodology section will go into detail regarding the background of the research questions and the complete research process. In this section, the data sample and analysis unit will be explained. The reader will also be able to understand the instrument and the questions used in the interview process. The strategies behind the data collection and analysis process will also be covered. The validity and reliability of the instrument will be discussed. Lastly, the approval process of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be discussed. This phenomenological study was based on Giele (2008) and her study in which she researched 48 homemakers and women who were alumnae of a few universities. Through these interviews, she uncovered many themes within her data that today is the basis of her life course studies. Creswell (2009) spoke to qualitative data as a way of interpreting the meaning of individual lives by understanding their human and social issues. In a qualitative form of study, one can uncover data regarding the participants' data and find themes within the responses. These themes become a possible generality to social and human problems of the subjects being studied.

This research project proposed a life course research study to better understand the work life integration of women who work from home and manage their career trajectory remotely, compared to their more visible peers, who may report into an office every day. The main goal of this study was to find strategies in work- life integration that will help women strive for leadership roles within their respective organizations and their society.

The work of Giele (2008) was grounded in system theory in which there are many moving parts to a life course that shape individuals' behavior. There are social and psychological implications in those moving parts. Parson (1955) discussed personality and how it could assist the researcher in understanding why some women decide to work or to stay at home. It could also address how juggling both roles could impact child rearing, career management, and motives.

Theoretical Framework

An adaptation of life course theory guided the study. Over the last couple of decades, life course theory has been applied to the study of human lives, which places the context of the study across the social and behavioral sciences (Elder, 1994). Humans exist within changing societies and have a choice in making decisions in their lives. The concept of life course theory has made time, context, and process dimensions of study along with the cultural and intergenerational variables (Elder, 1975).

Giele (2002, 2008) expanded on the life course theoretical framework to develop a set of factors related to life stories and gender role which she has framed as the life story method. The factors that are critical in shaping individuals' adult gender roles are sense of identity, type of marital relationship, personal drive and motivation, and adaptive style.

Research Methodology

The life course framework is a method that helps understand gender issues and the role gender plays in the study. The life course framework allowed the researcher to extract a small sample of subjects to gain a larger piece of knowledge on the overall sample. In researching women from various cultures, it will allow for the researcher to gain clarity on gender issues and roles within the professional work setting (Giele, 2008).

The framework for this study began with the work of Elder and Giele (1998) who created the life course research field. Some of the most crucial eras of social science research began during World War II, which has changed and formed the social environment. There is a mode of inquiry involved where certain individuals are affected by social change and their course of life is affected as well. There is a difference between the gender, race, and background through experiences and psychology has shown that.

Giele's ideology of life course change has many facets due societal values, institutions, and informal groups influence various aspects of women's lives. Individuals may adapt to their current condition or reform based on leaders who try to change a specific group. When a change in this group occurs, there are also changes in norms, institutional rules, and the values of the society. This is called the bidirectional model of changes in life course studies. Giele (2008) studied the timing and similarities of histories of individuals during different occurrences of age to pinpoint changes in education, career, and family. Giele used the four components of cultural background, social membership, individual goal orientation, and strategic adaptation to help understand the life course change of the history of women's social structure. The researcher used time, context, and past life experiences as a framework to share life stories.

Elder (1998) focused his studies on social structure and personality. He focused on a socialization through grading life events. He incorporated social structure and age into the study

of life course research. Elder discovered four main factors that shaped life course and they included: historical and geographical location, social connections to others, personal control, and changes in timing.

Per Elder and Giele (1998), there is a four-part paradigm that has formed the framework for life course research, which includes location, linked lives, human agency, and timing. Location refers to the time and place of history, social structure, and culture. Location in time relates to the social system approach that covers what individuals and groups belong with one another. Linked lives are the interactions that individuals experience within their social groups and institutions. Also, linked lives are related to a constituent or cultural approach that covers the ideology of properties of their individual members. Human agency is the link between the routes of personal goals through one's sense of self. Concerning human agency, many individuals use a social context to relate to certain actions in life and this relates to the development of the individual. Timing is related to the order of events through one's life that include the combination of personal, group, and historical markers. Timing uses the events as a date in time to correlate information between ages, dates, and events. This four-part paradigm is the basis of Elder and Giele's (1998) life course studies.

The ideas embodied by constructivism are important to understand because this point of view is relevant to the meaning of these proposed interviews and qualitative research. There are many assumptions in understanding social constructivism. First, humans socialize with the world around them, and in qualitative studies, open-ended questions help the subjects relay their points of view. This substantiates the notion in constructivism that each of us constructs a reality that can be imagined or valued as qualitatively as real as agreed on social reality. Furthermore, individuals are brought into the world trying to find meaning and the easiest way to do that is through social and historical views of the world around them. Hence, qualitative studies try to

understand the social setting of the subjects by connecting with them personally. Moreover, qualitative research is usually social through interacting with the community around them (Crotty, 1998).

The study addressed the three questions below and variables associated with them.

Restatement of Research Questions

1. What experiences (relationships, professional and personal) as well as motivational factors shape the life course of women and impact work-life flexibility decisions?

2. What similarities and differences exist, if any, between women who opted for a flexible schedule and those who chose not to pursue flexible options?

3. What are the relationships between influencers and career goals related to flexible work decisions (i.e., "What influenced you to make the decision?")?

Data Gathering Instruments

The data gathering instruments included a rubric of open-ended interview questions that cover the four areas discussed in Giele's (2008) life course research. The four questions cover topics of early adulthood, childhood and adolescence, current and future adulthood. The instrument used can be viewed in Appendix B. An additional question was added to focus on strategies that women use for work-life flexibility. These questions were asked via phone and in-person interviews. The subjects were also asked to answer a few questions regarding their demographic background. Those questions were also included in Appendix B.

Process for Selection of Data Sources

The sample size the researcher interviewed were 20 women in corporate settings to understand their work-life flexibility challenges. The women were selected from the researcher's personal network of colleagues and past and current work colleagues, as well as members of Corporate Women's networks in the Southeast. The researcher uncovered strategies on how

women created work life capabilities to overcome obstacles they were facing in various facets of their lives.

Respondent driven sampling was used for the study. This type of sampling is used when a focused type of group is needed for data collection. This form of sampling is also known as snowball sampling that allows an existing sample to involve others to participate in the study. This is a technique for developing a research sample where the existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus, the sample group likens itself to a rolling snowball. Researchers believe that it is not possible to make unbiased estimates from snowball samples, but rather, a variation of snowball sampling called respondent-driven sampling has been shown to allow researchers to make asymptotically unbiased estimates from snowball samples under certain conditions. These other participants could be family members, colleagues, friends, coworkers, or classmates.

The population for this study was derived from the researcher's current role and profession as a Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion at a global human capital consulting organization in the United States. The researcher had access and communicates with various women around the world who operate within special working arrangements like alternative work arrangements, flexible arrangements, or telecommuting. Additionally, the researcher had access to many women in various networks that have shown interest in this study. This allowed the researcher to gain the sample that included corporate women working from home to better understand their life course story. These women identified by the researcher's personal network and others identified through random sampling were invited to participate in the study.

Data Gathering Procedures

An invitation letter to participate in the study was administered to the subject, which had a clear description of the study and it can be reviewed in Appendix A. These interviews were

being drawn from a sample of women; hence, the interviews were conducted either face to face

or in person. This approach allowed for a personal feel for the story and enabled the researcher to

ask follow up questions and establish trust with participants.   By speaking via phone or live, the

interviewer used a recorder to record the interviews.

Information about the project was included in the website, along with the informed

consent, which they read before they started the study. Women could share their name if they

chose to. They also could choose to make their information confidential (for the researcher's use

only) or public (for opportunities for other scholars to utilize the data). Pseudonyms were chosen

for each subject. The subjects were also asked to answer a few questions regarding their

demographic background that can be viewed in Appendix B. The interview protocol in Appendix

D notifies the participant that the study is voluntary.

The subjects read the informed consent before the interviews began, and agreed to the

terms of the interview. The informed consent was to protect both the interviewer and the

subjects; a copy can be viewed in Appendix C. It also reinforced the voluntary nature of the

study. A copy of the interview questions can be viewed in Appendix B.

To protect the subjects, the interviews were structured with the utilization of a

pseudonym as an identifier. This protected the anonymity of the subjects while coding. This

allowed the researcher to match the socio-demographic information. When quoted in the

literature, the researcher solely used the pseudonym and this protected the participants even

further. This also helped uncover any underlying themes in the data. Once interviews were

confirmed, a thank you letter for agreeing to participate was sent to the participant and a sample

can be viewed in Appendix E.

As the interviews took place in person or by phone, participants were not anonymous to

the researcher. The participants' responses and their information remained confidential and

anonymous in the written study and were not identified. Participants were assigned a random pseudonym to prevent identification. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher accessed the interview notes and transcribed them from the digital recorder. Only trained graduate research assistants and doctoral dissertation students using the data have access to the recordings. No other researchers accessed these interviews.

When the data was analyzed, the only identification were the pseudonym given to each participant. Participants were asked if quotes can be used in the dissertation using pseudonyms. The use of NVivo software to analyze and find themes within the data was used solely by the researcher, who had a personal account and subscription, and was password protected. Once the data was transferred to NVivo, it was identified by pseudonym only. NVivo was used to code the data received from this qualitative research project. Given the researcher's focus on interviewing 20 women, it was critical to code the data and make sense of the unstructured information. NVivo is a tool that coded, sorted, and arranged information and can aide in the research process and provided for accelerated data management (QSR). The data will be stored for five years and then destroyed.

Instrument

An in-person interview was administered via phone or face to face and the results of the data were analyzed. The questions allowed for open-ended responses. The advantages of this method of interviewing was the opportunity for clarification and follow-up. It also helped with respondent fatigue during a full interview process (Bryman, 2008). The questions listed on the instrument are provided below

Interview Questions

Question #1. [Early adulthood]

About the period in your life immediately after completing your education or your early twenties. What was the level of your education? Did it include college education and/or graduate education? What did you think you would like to become in terms of occupation and type of lifestyle or family life? What were you thinking then and how did things actually turn out?

Question #2 [Childhood and adolescence]

Thinking of the period in your life before completing your education and the goals that you and your family held for you, what was your family's attitude toward women's education and what you would become? What was the effect of your parents' education, presence of brothers and sisters, family finances, involvement in a faith community, family expectations? How was your education different from or like that of your parents and brothers and sisters?

Question #3 [Adulthood to current]

Since completing your education, what kinds of achievement and frustration have you experienced? What type of mentors have you had? What has happened that you did not expect in employment, family, faith, and further education? Has there been job discrimination, children, separation or divorce, or health problems of yourself or a family member? What about moves, membership in the community, faith community, housing problems, racial integration, or job loss? And feelings about yourself? Have there been good things, such as particular rewards, satisfaction, or recognition?

Question #4 [Adulthood to future]

Looking back at your life from this vantage point, and ahead to the future, what are your main concerns? What are your goals, hopes, and dreams for the next few years? What problems

do you hope to solve? Looking further out, where do you hope to be a few years from now with respect to work or additional schooling, family, faith, community, mentors, health, finances, etc.?

Question #5 [Strategies for balancing life]

What coping strategies do you use to respond to concerns related to the plurality of roles? Have you ever felt pressured to choose between work and home? What made you think that you could do both successfully? Do you feel that your family life or work life have suffered because of your involvement in work or family? Have you felt any guilt related to either family or work? Are there times that you felt particularly successful at juggling the demands of both work and home? Why? Were you prepared for the demands of work and life balance? Why or why not? What strategies do you implement in your own life to remain balanced?

Validity and Reliability of Data

Within qualitative research, the quality of the data is crucial to understand the context within the setting (Patton, 1990). The information is noted as quality because there are no numerical measurements (Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative researchers strive to illuminate, understand, and extract instances from their findings where quantitative researchers predict and generalize their findings based on a numerical approach (Hoepfl, 1997).

Validity is shown through the access of information through investigative inquiry in qualitative study and open-ended questions. The validity of the study verifies that the researcher accurately measured the data she was trying to research (Golafshani, 2003). This research is based on a humanistic approach, which is frequently used within social constructivist. Every individual searches for meaning in the world around them. This is seen in their lives at home and their work environment. Researchers use qualitative phenomenological research methods, such as interviews, open-ended questions, and semi structured interviews to understand individual life stories. It allows participants to share their experiences in a private setting. The researcher can

view responses in a different cultural context and historical manner. This research methodology does not begin as a theory, but it allows researchers to uncover themes and patterns based on meanings from discussions with the subjects (Creswell, 2009).

Reliability is shown within the study if its results can be replicated in any way. Credibility of the data is the result of how the researcher conducts the research (Golafshani, 2003). Within qualitative research, the researcher becomes the instrument (Patton, 1990); therefore, the researcher needs to be trained appropriately on how to conduct the interview.

The credibility of this study has been validated through the research group and the training given to the group. Every student that has conducted interviews through the Digital Women's Project has been trained in professionalism and how to conduct themselves during the interview process (Weber, 2011).

The researcher was taught to keep to the questions designed in the instrument and not to add personal biases and additional questions not approved in advance by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher was shown how to go over informed consent forms and how to keep details of the subjects private. The researcher was trained to create rapport with their subjects so they feel comfortable throughout the process. This included sending invitations to participate in the study, going over interview protocols, and sending thank you letters for participating in the study. The narrative questions used are from Giele's (2008) study on life course research, which is a framework utilized with the Women Digital Project. Giele's (2008) framework have also been incorporated in many dissertations within the Digital Women's Project research group as well (Weber, 2011).

Analysis of the Interview Data

The following themes were the basis for analyzing the data (Giele, 2008).

(1) Identity: How does A see herself? Who does she identify with as being like herself? Does she mention her race, ethnicity, social class, [religion], or how she is different or like her family? What qualities does she mention that distinguish her—intelligence, being quiet, likable, innovative, outstanding, a good mother, lawyer, wife, and so forth?

Identity is one of the four factors of the life course approach that shows how a woman views herself on basis of culture, ethnicity, race, or social class. The codes used for analyzing identity are historical and cultural. Identity is shown through the subject's location, space, and time. The theoretical foundations are values, beliefs, and purpose of being. When looking at identity, the researcher was observing if the subject is different or conventional within their setting (Elder & Giele, 1998).

(2) Relationship Style: What is A's typical way of relating to others as a leader, follower, negotiator, and/or equal colleague? Taking charge: Is she independent, very reliant on others for company and support, has a lot of friends, or is lonely? What Is the nature of the relationship with her husband or significant other [and her children]?

Relationship style is one of the four factors of life course research, which involves one's relationship with others throughout their lives. The relationships looked at are social relationships created through the subject's life course. Relationship style has a lot to do with what social circles the subject is a part of and any personal loyalties shaped (Giele, 2008). The background of one's family, social frustrations, economical changes, and traits of the individual shape the context of life course research and relationship style is a key variable. This variable is one of the continuous factors that mold an individual's life (Elder & Giele, 2008).

Limitations of Study

This study came from a feministic point of view. Feminist researchers tend to choose interviews and qualitative studies to be able to express ideas and for their stories to be shared.

Women use this form of research so the voice of the women is heard through others' words and not the researcher themselves. There are many reviews of qualitative research in which educators believe the data is too subjective, difficult to replicate, overly generalized, and not transparent, yet it is prominently used in the feminist research framework. Making assumptions on large populations from a small sample size can be inaccurate in many ways (Byrman, 2008).

Plans for IRB

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sent an application by the researcher explaining the details of this study and framework to gain approval to begin this qualitative study. The application detailed how human subjects will be protected throughout the interview process. It explained that the departmental requirements have been achieved and no copyright issues have been reported.

Once the proposal was accepted, the IRB forms were filled out and submitted to the dissertation chair for completeness and approval. Approval was granted by the chair to include all dissertation students involved in the Digital Women's Project: Work Life Balance Issues research group to submit an application for a claim of exemption citing approval # E0719F03-AM2013-01. Due to the similarity of frameworks used by the research group, the IRB application was expedited.

Summary

One of the most important purposes of this study was to understand how women in corporate settings were viewed from a career management perspective within a work force with heavy demands on travel, visibility, exposure, and access to senior level leaders. The study attempted to find strategies to help women achieve a work-life integration solution that works for them. There have been many interviews done based on the life course studies introduced by Giele (2008), and her framework is the basis of this study. Weber (2011) used the same

methodology of understanding subjects based on responses from interviews trying to understand women's identity, relationship style, drive and motivation.

Work-life integration has many dimensions that have been studied over the past decade. The Digital Women's Project (Weber, 2011) had several students pursuing their dissertation research. The variety of topics displayed the breadth of the qualitative methodology and is based on the Giele (2008) framework. Krymis (2011) was concerned with understanding women of faith and its impact on balance issues. Barge (2011) was particularly interested in the competing priorities of African American women and the issues that they faced as they sought to achieve work-life integration. And finally, Heath (2012) categorized the various strategies that women employed in achieving work-life integration for women with children. Many additional studies are currently underway in support of this project.

The population used for this study was women in corporate settings living in the Southeastern states of the United States primarily Georgia and North Carolina. Several of the women grew up outside of the United States and have global roles in the companies. The interview protocol in place was sent to the interviewees before the study took place that addressed their rights as a participant. At any time, subjects felt uncomfortable, they could withdraw from the study. Human subjects were protected by data confidentiality and using a uniform system to code data.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Some employers are providing the choice to work from home for employees at certain levels. If women do not have the right set up at home, support system, and discipline to get work done, it can be more of a distraction than an opportunity to increase productivity. For women who are already juggling work-life balance, it can be a significant career game changer in both advantageous and career limiting ways. As described by Teasdale (2013), "Women's interests do not always coincide and their social relationships with respect to flexible working, involved both support and resentment" (p. 397).

People are brought into the world to find meaning and one of the best ways to discover this meaning is through the perspectives and contexts of what is around them. Qualitative studies attempt to grasp the social construct of subjects via personal connections. This type of research, thus, is social in nature through an interaction with a community to collect study data (Crotty, 1998).

This study featured the personal experiences of 20 women who either worked from home or had an option to work from home but chose not to for various reasons. These women lived in the United States and were from various backgrounds and religious cultures. Some had global roles. The qualitative phenomenological study explored how motivational factors, mentors, and family impacted women's abilities to navigate and achieve work-life balance. Since women who work from home encounter unique stressors, challenges, and experiences related to their career journey, this study compared the experiences of 10 women identified as working for a company full-time but using a home office as their work spaces with 10 women who had the option to work from home but chose not to. The personal experiences of the 10 women who decided to

work from home full time indicated ways that flexibility changed their lives. The comparative

sample of women who worked daily in a corporate office setting were also analyzed within these

themes. The findings revealed the differences between these two groups regarding their outlook,

family lifestyles, finances, and navigation of work-life balance. Successful strategies for

navigating work-life balance for the two groups were explored: motivational factors, support

systems, mentors, and faith.

The foundational theoretical framework was provided by J. A. Giele's (2008) life story

method, which analyzed narratives through the lenses of identity, relationship style, drive and

motivation, and adaptive styles of women. However, this study utilized the guidelines of (a)

drive and motivation, and (b) adaptive style from the Giele (2008) study:

Drive and motivation: Need for achievement, affiliation, power. Is she driven and

ambitious or relaxed and easy going? Is she concerned to make a name for herself?

Focused more on helping her husband and children than on her own needs (nurturing vs

achievement focused)? Mentions enjoying life and wanting to have time for other things

besides work. Enjoys being with children, volunteering, spending time with family and

friends. A desire to be in control of her work schedule to be in charge rather than take

orders. Adaptive style: What is her energy level? Is she an innovator and a risk taker or

conventional and uncomfortable with change and new experiences? Does she like to

manage change, think of new ways of doing things? Is she self-confident or cautious?

Used to a slow or fast pace, to routine and having plenty of time, or to doing several

things at once? (p. 402)

Interviews

From the outcomes of the live interviews and conversations by phone and the basic

coding through NVivo, themes emerged through the lens of (a) ambition and motivation and (b)

adaptive styles of women. Additionally, strategies for work-life balance emerged through the

narratives. The research questions were utilized as the basis to analyze the findings. These are

the research questions that guided this study:

1. What experiences (relationships, professional, and personal) as well as motivational

   factors shape the life course of women that impact work-life balance and family-life

   balance decisions?

2. What similarities and differences exist, if any, between women who opted for a

   flexible schedule and those who chose not to pursue flexible options?

3. What are the relationships between influencers and career goals on the work

   decision? (i.e., What influenced you to make the decision)

Data Collection

The researcher used a form of sampling known as *respondent driven sampling*. This type

of sampling is used when a focused type of group is needed for data collection. This form of

sampling is also known as *snowball sampling*, which allows an existing sample to involve others

to participate in the study. This is a technique for developing a research sample where the

existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus, the sample

group appears to grow like a rolling snowball. Researchers believe that it is impossible to

maintain unbiased estimates from snowball samples, but the variation of snowball sampling

called respondent-driven sampling has been shown to allow researchers to make asymptotically

unbiased estimates from snowball samples under certain conditions. These other participants

could be family members, colleagues, friends, coworkers, or classmates. Sampling within a large region can be difficult, and with this type of sampling, the researcher will be able to reach many women (Bryman, 2008).

Data Gathering Procedures

An invitation letter to participate in the study was administered to the subject; the letter had a clear description of the study, and it can be reviewed in Appendix B. These interviews were drawn from a sample of women in corporate settings; hence, the subjects were contacted to set up interviews via telephone. With the use of the telephone, the researcher could reach a larger population of individuals. Also, the distance became a non-issue because the participant only needed to have access to a computer or phone (Bryman, 2008).

Population Description and Selection Criteria

The 20 women interviewed were a subset for this study from the Digital Women's Project. The subset was comprised of 10 women working from home full time while maintaining full-time corporate jobs and 10 women with flexibility options who chose to work in the office daily. Ten of the women were younger than 50 years old, while 10 of the women were over the age of 50. Regarding being an ethnically diverse sample, here is the representation: Filipino (1), African American (7), Caucasian (9), Indian (2), and (1) Latina. The diversity represented was an a bonus for the final outcomes of the study as the researcher was able to do a small comparison based on nationality/ethnicity. Regarding religious preference, here is what was indicated: Baptist (3), Catholic (2), Christian (8), Church of Christ (3), Jewish (2), Methodist, and (2) No response. The reported annual income ranged from $57,000 to $275,000. The average salary was $123,000. In addition, Table 1 also shares information about marital status, number of kids, occupation, and education level.

Table 1

Population Demographics, Group A (1-10) and Group B (11-20)

	Education	Industry	Ethnicity/Nationality	Status	Children	Religion
#1 Shonda	AA	Business Software System	African American	Divorced	1	Baptist
#2 Lakshmi	BS	Development	Indian	Married	1	No response
#3 Christy	BS	IT	African American	Married	2	Baptist
#4 Darlene	BS	Aerospace	Filipino	Living Together	2	Christian
#5 Emily	MA	Trainer	African American	Divorced & Living w/Partner	0	Baptist
#6 Fiona	MBA	Corporate	Caucasian	Widowed	2	No response
#7 Grace	PhD	Legal	African American	Married	2	Christian
#8 Joan	AA	Corporate	African American	Divorced	3	Christian
#9 Daria	PhD	Corporate	Caucasian	Married	2	Christian
#10 Joyce	PhD	Corporate	Caucasian	Single	0	Catholic
#11 Kerri	MBA	Financial Planning	African American	Married	2	Methodist
#12 Regina	PhD	Financial Planning	Caucasian	Married	1	Christian
#13 Mary	JD	Attorney	Caucasian	Married	2	Jewish
#14 Jane	JD	Corporate	Indian	Married	2	Hindi
#15 Brigette	MA	HR	Undisclosed	Divorced	2	Jewish
#16 Marcela	PhD	Marketing	Latina	Married	1	Catholic
#17 Caitlin	MA	Corporate	Caucasian	Married	2	Jewish
#18 Ronda	MA	Design and Marketing	Caucasian	Married	1	Catholic
#19 Saranah	PhD	County administrator	African American	Married	2	Christian
#20 Tina	AA	Corporate	Caucasian	Married	3	Christian

Data Analysis

The Digital Women's Project interviews were recorded with the permission of each woman interviewed. The researcher used a digital recorder to focus attention on their responses. The 20 interviews that comprised Group A (full-time work from home) and Group B (work from office) (see Table 1) for this study were fully transcribed and uploaded to NVivo 10 software for coding purposes. Sticky notes were used to begin drafting ideas on themes as the researcher listened to the replay of each interview. To uncover themes and synthesize the data, the information was grouped together into codes (Creswell, 2009). NVivo software is designed to synthesize these codes and main themes as *nodes*. As each transcript was reviewed from Group A's and Group B's interviews with the research questions as the foundation, all pertinent themes were created into a node (see Table 2). If there were any other similar themes that applied to the created node, then the related quote was entered into NVivo. To ensure reliability of the transcription, there were at least two readings of the interview transcript, and then it was coded. All tof he pertinent quotes were entered into NVivo in the nodes and sub nodes, which further described primary thematic trends.

Findings

Research question #1: What experiences (relationships, professional, and personal) as well as motivational factors shape the life course of women that impact work-family life balance decisions?

This question was applied to Group A and Group B. For Group A, two themes emerged: (a) The choice to work from home often times forces lifestyle or a mindset change, which can be the result of being proactive or reactive to circumstances and (b) working from home can create social isolation and a disconnectedness from the inner workings of the company, which can lead to sadness and even depression. Here are a few comments that highlight how family and

motivational factors impacted their motivation and goals while striving to achieve work-life balance:

Shonda: I have been working from home for the last 5 years. I started working from home when I was married and of course, thought my husband and I would continue to be married. He worked out of the home and we had a nice balance, managing the busy schedules of our 3 children. I consider myself very ambitious and made sure my husband would be supportive of my working from home. A sick child and a divorce impacted my ability to be productive and I scaled back my work and decided to work a 60% schedule to focus on my children and put my personal life back together. It helped me realize that I needed to prioritize and consider the future of my children, how my divorce would affect their lives and determine the right time to ramp my career back up.

Grace: When I was 40, I completed my Ph.D. and was ready to take on a larger role as the chief legal counsel in my company. I was so excited when it was offered to me and I was afforded the chance to work full time from home. After the first 6 months, I realized I felt more disconnected from the company than I preferred, despite being on the senior leadership team. I knew I needed to seek out a mentor to help keep me connected to the inner workings of the office dynamics I was now missing out on. I never imagined holding such a prestigious role in the company but feeling so isolated. I am so grateful for the flexibility, but constantly fear being visible will eventually impact my ability to continue to be assigned challenging assignments and work. I am working now on strategies to stay connected and have decided to go into the office every other week for one day for my team meetings. I am already realizing the difference in being visible. Sometimes it is the smallest things that make a difference when it comes to remote working.

Darlene: Regarding influencers, I have always had a strong support system in my family and have had strong female and male bosses throughout my career that have helped put me in a position to succeed by guiding me through tough work decisions, including the decision to work from home full time, due to a recent restructuring in my organization. Working from home requires a lot of confidence. I have to have confidence to know I am performing well and that my strong relationship with the leadership will afford me the feedback I need and require to continuously improve. My domestic partner helps with the two kids when I work late. He also helps with house work when I travel for work. I do not believe I could do this successfully without the support of him and my mother who lives close by. I have often asked myself if my work situation is long term or short term. I would like to work from home as long as I can.

As the result of working from home either full time or being able to but choosing not to, Group B had compelling reasons to examine their drive and motivation. Due to being proactive or reactive, often it caused deep reflection about what is important and sometimes resulted in a lifestyle change or deeper connection and commitment to family. The plight of the woman working flexibly in the workplace has generational implications as well, even more so when it comes to the norms of working family (Sandberg, 2013, p. 45).

Research question #2 What similarities and differences exist, if any, between women who opted for a flexible schedule and those who chose not to pursue flexible options?

For Group B, one clear theme emerged about how competing priorities impacted the motivation and goals for those who are striving to achieve work-life balance: challenges regarding aging parents often resulted in unexpected lifestyle choices, such as moving parents into elder care facilities or moving kids to or out of private school, negotiating various work arrangements within the office setting, and taking advantage of having ample vacation. Many of

these factors impacted drive and motivation. Women in both groups experienced the financial challenge of having a spouse downsize his job to allow for his wife to take on a larger role in the company to accommodate family and child needs. Some of the Group B women stated:

> **Jane**: When I watched some of my peers get promoted while on a flexible arrangement I knew it was supported and I could try. My mentor told me to keep my job in the office but I wanted the flexibility to do more in my church. My family prayed with me about it and I was blessed to learn my flexible arrangement was approved. I sought the advice of a mentor who told me that I would be recognized for larger projects if I stayed in the office. My career progression is important, but my ability to spend more time working from Chicago and caring for my aging mother is more important. I could arrange to work from our Chicago site, once a month. When you get to be of a certain age, your priorities shift and before you know it, everything falls into place personally and professionally.

> **Mary**: It was initially unimaginable for me to think about working full time in an office after my first child was born. I didn't want to take my baby to day care when it was time for me to go back to work and there was so much guilt. I became depressed. I remembered my mother saying to me that I deserved the best and that she worked hard to provide a life for me so I could have the career I wanted. I work to have an active role in my children's development, while having a fulfilling career. They say you can't have it all, but I did both.

Women Who Work from Home Full Time (Group A)

There were 10 women identified as working full time from home in primarily full-time corporate roles. The selection in Group A represented various ethnicities, generations, marital statuses, educational backgrounds, and religious backgrounds. Regarding marital status, these

are the results: single (1), married (4), divorced (2), widowed (1), and living together (2). Eight of the women from Group A had kids.

Here is the breakdown regarding the types of work arrangements they experienced:

Full time work from home every other Friday off (5), full time M-F 9-5 (1), Tues-Friday every other Monday off (1), 10 hour days M-Thursday with Friday off (2), and undisclosed (1). For the most part, all women felt very autonomous, were in senior level roles, and felt they had positive working relationships with their colleagues, and they trusted relationships with leadership, which they had developed over time. Regarding their lifestyle and family lives, four women indicated they had hoped to start a family within a few years of marriage and become a single income household and venture out to take on entrepreneurial endeavors. However, even when they are working full-time and earning more than their spouses or partners, many women are still responsible for more than half of the household chores and child care in their homes (Hewlett et al., 2010).

Entrepreneurialism was a common theme for many. The desire for business ownership was very prominent. They had visions of starting their own marketing or education boutique-consulting firms. For all of them, those were dreams that needed to be put on hold. Putting career expectations on hold was a common thread heard amongst many of the women who worked at home and on site. Emily noted,

I had always dreamed of being an entrepreneur. Working from home for the last few years gives me the flexibility I need to write and ideate; however, my parents are now ill, and my husband hasn't progressed in his career, so I find myself with little time after I dedicate endless hours to my aging parents and raising my children. This isn't the vision I had for myself.

Emily continued to assert that her son wanted to know who was going to take them to school since Mommy became so busy with grandma and grandpa. Many non-working parents pour a lot of energy into their daily work and work upwards of 58 hours a week, collectively, while families with children work on average a combined 91 hours a week (Galinsky et al., 2004).

Caring for aging parents was a recurring theme for both groups. Group A citing the excitement in having the flexibility to work remotely, and often work from a parent's home in a different state. It was confirming to hear, through the interviews and anecdotal information shared, each woman had experiences in common with another, including being grateful for working for an organization that values work life flexibility.

Another recurring theme for both groups was the family relying on the mother's income and the woman being more educated (in most cases having a graduate degree). In many cases for those who had children and wanted to take extended time off to spend with their children, they made the choice to go back to work full time more quickly due to the many financial responsibilities of the household.

Education was a high priority in most of the households these women came from although variations did exist across ethnicity/nationality. It appeared that in African-American, Latino, and Indian households, education was discussed early during childhood and consistently reinforced; whereas, for others, while assumed, it wasn't a recurring dinner conversation. Joan disclosed,

> I knew very early that my parents would not be able to afford school, I also knew that they expected all of us to attend (I have two sisters and one brother). Being the third child, I witnessed the sacrifice they made for my older siblings and knew I would have to cover the costs on my own. My parents were immigrants from West India, and I knew they wanted the best for us.

It is interesting that all of Joan's siblings have a master's degree except for one, and they all went to the same high school and college. The Table 2 depicts the organization of those who responded to the questions in relation to how the nodes were created and how often it was referenced within the stories of the women. It is also noted that the percentage of the interview that was coded for the strategy.

Table 2

Source Strategy

Name	Node	Reference	Percent of Interview coded for strategies
Shonda	18	21	18%
Lakshmi	12	16	18.9%
Christy	13	19	11%
Darlene	21	29	11.1%
Emily	11	15	19.9%
Fiona	8	17	18.6%
Grace	3	8	8.9%
Joan	12	18	11.9%
Daria	12	21	12.4%
Joyce	4	16	14.7%
Kerry	9	13	15.6%
Regina	10	16	17.8%
Mary	5	10	14.8%
Jane	7	9	10.2%
Brigette	10	13	7.3%

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Name	Node	Reference	Percent of Interview coded for strategies
Marcela	6	10	11.5%
Ronda	8	12	14.3%
Caitlin	10	14	9.5%
Saranah	9	11	17.3%
Tina	4	8	10.9%

As strategies were brought forth though the conversations, nodes were created in the NVivo software. A total of 68 nodes were created. The organization of strategies are listed in Table 3, which shows the name of the strategy and the number of resources that referred to the strategy. It also indicates the number of references made in total.

Table 3

Work Life Balance Strategies

Strategies	Resources	References
Accepting feelings of guilt	6	8
Balance	5	15
Becoming a leader	9	9
Care for children	6	8
Children's achieving	9	6
Commitment to work	8	8
Community work	10	12
Confidence	15	9
Developing others	14	10
Education	9	12
Emasculating men	4	3
Faith	7	10
Family	12	9
Finance	10	8

(continued)

Having goals	12	6
Managing demands of others	14	7
Me time	7	8
Meaningful work	16	10
Mentors	14	14
Motivation	10	9
Networking	12	7
Selflessness	11	12
Spouse's support	10	10
Travel	8	11
Women's empowerment	11	8
Workplace flexibility	10	7

Women Working in an Office (Group B)

There were 10 women who did not work from home and worked in an office setting full time. This selection in Group B also represented various ethnicities, generations, marital statuses, educational backgrounds, and religious backgrounds. In Group B, all women were married and all had children who helped cement the ideals of the need for work life flexibility.

Discussions with Group B were interesting. The women were very reflective of their experiences of working in the office and the guilt that was felt about wanting to spend more time with aging parents, children, spouses, and friends. Many were contemplating working part-time, changing careers, or seeking other employment to achieve some semblance of work-life balance. By comparison, Stone (2007) wrote that women who are in professions of high rank and managerial positions are more opportunity to combine work and motherhood than women in other positions. They can afford child care and their employees are much more supportive in creating a work life integration. Ronda recalled,

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I started to feel guilty, needed to take time off to care for my sick child, or having child care issues, but I realized it is the way of life, and our employers are more empathetic and understanding than we sometimes give them credit for. I had been reading a lot of articles on work life flexibility, and to me that means, my employer being flexible with me, so I can meet their needs and my own. So I work full time in the office, but I take advantage of my 5 weeks of vacation per year, I found that with my role and level of responsibilities, I want to have flexibility and be visible at the same time, and negotiating that through actively engaging my leadership about what I need, has been instrumental in getting my needs met. Everyone is happy!

Saranah stated,

I initially thought I was going to switch to part-time work because I work for the county and we do not have a lot of flexibility. However, I am very fortunate to have an aging retired mother who has offered to assist with child care, and it has been a life saver. I was so torn between my career and making decisions about my kids, and I feel so grateful to have my mother closer now to offer us help. I never imagined 20 years ago that I would be faced with these tough decisions. I do still believe women can achieve this work life thing, but with some consequences and tough conversations both with our employers and our families.

Research Question #3 What are the relationships between influencers and career goals on the work decision?

There are many influencers that make women decide they would like to have a flexible work schedule (Gersick, 2013). Many women mentioned that the perspective of their families shaped their decision making, especially on decisions regarding family and work life. The

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contextual background of their upbringing, culture, faith, and motivational factors were all key influencers. Many are described in the pages ahead, as themes and sub-categories.

The women interviewed had many similarities and differences. The cultural backgrounds of the women varied and several themes emerged from the nodes. To help clarify, after reviewing key strategies, five themes were created and each of them had sub categories that were reflective of additional themes. Table 4 was created to demonstrate the amount of references they had in NVivo from greatest to least.

Table 4

Themes from Work-Life

Balance	Sub-strategies
Women's empowerment	● Friends/Girlfriends
	● Confidence
	● Goals
	● Travel
	● Spouse's support
	● Community
Mentor	● Developing others
	● Developing self
	● Self-care
	● Networking
Meaningful work	● Commitment to work
	● Finance
	● Accepting feelings of guilt
	● Selflessness
Faith	● Christianity
	● Mentor
	● Managing the demands of others
Education	● Self-education
	● Home schooling
	● Higher education

The women's empowerment theme came up in a total of 42 references from 17 sources. The self-perception of confidence levels and desire for support of spouse or family and friends

was a recurring theme. When these women had the support of spouse/s, significant others, and girlfriends encouraging their commitments and desires for balance, they felt and demonstrated more self-confident behaviors. Also in this node, the support and respect of family was important as well. The successful pathway for their children was mentioned nine times by six women because the desire was to provide a balanced life where children could thrive, have access to family members, spend quality time with mom and dad (in the cases where men were present), and get the support they needed. One particularly striking comment was made by Caitlin regarding children's achievement:

> I was responsible for caring for elder parents and while I travel for business once a week, my parents did not like for me to be gone longer than two days a week. There was a lot of pressure by my family to pursue marriage and schooling was put second but my sole desire was to make my parents proud. After college, I became a bank teller and from there went on to get my MBA. I met my husband in graduate school and we married within three months of meeting as we both wanted a family. I took on a bigger job at the bank and we had to quickly decide about starting a family sooner versus holding off. We had our first child within the first year of marriage. I was promoted while I was expecting. My husband wanted me to stay home to be with our children, so I took a work from home role within the large international bank. I had my second child, our second year of marriage. I was promoted again. I wanted nothing more than to raise bright children. We wanted the best schools and education for them, and I was willing to make the sacrifice of cutting back in my career. I cut back to 50% of time ten years ago and have been able to maintain a healthy balance with my spouse and my two children, while making time for my aging mother. My husband is a tremendous help, and my kids are thriving. I have the life I always wanted.

The education node was referenced 12 times and there were various stories about education of the women interviewed as well as education of children and supporting the spouse or significant other during their educational endeavors. Many women also discussed their disappointment and frustration with various K-12 education systems, up to the point that they wanted to home school or send their children to private school. The key sub-strategy that was referenced here is self-education. Some of the women spoke about taking education into their own hands and ensuring their academic setting when they were younger would enable them to achieve wealth, in some cases, as their parents had, or in ways they wished their parents had been able to provide for them. Mary stated,

> Self-education is about ensuring you have the self-discipline and control over your own destiny. I grew up in Israel, and while education is very important in Israel, there are many paths one can take to ensure adequate education. One is by taking it in your own hands. My parents grew up very poor and our educational systems were not very strong and my desire for higher education postgraduate school shaped my path towards self-education. I was home schooled by my grandmother for 12 years, and took it upon myself to read everything I could get my hands on. I graduated magna cum laude at 14 from high school and entered university at the age of 15. I finished college at 18. It was critical to me to be smart, and be afforded the opportunities that would enable me to be a significant contributor to society and my family.

Empowering their peers and other women in the industry was referenced 23 times by nine sources. The participants who joined women's groups seemed more successful and happy in current work situations. They were also able to increase their confidence. Confidence was referenced 11 times by eight women and crucial in the development of women. It allowed them to break the barriers of entry by setting goals for themselves. They, then, had friends to

encourage them to achieve these goals. Having good friends that empowered women to take that extra course or that new job opportunity was an advantage, and that is why setting goals was referenced 12 times by six women. Some of the participants didn't receive that support from their family and needed it from their colleagues, friends, and women's support groups. Research has cited that women like to see others pave the way, which serves as a motivating factor that women can have it all (Sandberg, 2013). This was illustrated in a quote by Tina:

> I always wanted to be more assertive at work. I never quite mastered the confidence that I see emulated in some of the male leaders in my company. I watch them negotiate and ask for what they want, get the promotions and raises, and work late. It almost seems as if care-giving responsibilities fell to their spouses. I finally mustered up the courage to ask for larger responsibilities at work and asked my husband to help out more with our kids. It has been the most wonderful outcome. It has provided the balance I needed, and my husband and I now have a date night twice a month and are closer than ever. I never knew that confidence could make the difference.

Work Strategies

The conversations referenced various work strategies that enabled these women to achieve some form of work-life flexibility, which was referenced 10 times by seven sources. Many working women feel the pressures of time and begin to seek out new job opportunities to help with work-life integration (Filipovic, 2013). This, then, impacts the gender imbalance in the primary organization, thus fueling inequity. When women felt supported by family and friends, they could juggle and navigate the complexities of work and home. Also, women who could take advantage of flexible work options could work a schedule that benefited their employer, them, and their families. The type of flexible work options included support from employers, remote access work, reduced work schedules, and having day care options within the organization.

Another sub-strategy mentioned and that was referenced 12 times by seven sources was networking. Women found that being involved in the communities and support teams created ecosystems of support and supported their dreams to get ahead. It also created opportunities for them to be exposed to positions they normally would not be able to obtain without the network. Women created a social network that was separate from their family network. It made them happy and gave them a sense of camaraderie. The following quotes illustrate the social network that these women created. Fiona stated,

> I joined a Working Mothers community to stay connected to women who were having similar challenges in the workplace with work-life and the many demands of caring for children. I didn't realize how much networking with other working parents could help me with different situations I was dealing with. My friends and family helped me re-engage and boost my confidence, which later would become an integral part of who I have become today as a leader. I have renewed confidence thanks to the friends I now call my sisters.

Daria wrote,

> Thanks to some of my networking groups, I was introduced to classes on executive presence and confidence for women, I am better positioned to ask for some of the intrinsic benefits I see some of the other women at work asking for, like back-up child care reimbursement for when I am working late, or simple things like, reducing my travel for client work so I can be at home with my kids more. For some reason, I always felt guilty about asking for what I saw other people getting.

Darlene stated,

> Waiting until later to have kids with my partner, allowed me to make a name for myself at work, and establish credibility with leaders, and I felt more able to do it all, and have it

all. I think women can have it all. I am a great mom, and a great leader, and I love the internal network of mentors, both male and female, that support me and guide me.

Meaningful Work

Sustainable commitment to work and fulfillment is key to a balanced life. The node was referenced 16 times by 10 people. Many women expressed feeling competitive within themselves to obtain certain goals by a certain time, or a competitive advantage that instilled within them, the commitment to maintain loyalty to their employers who had invested so much time and development in them. Commitment to work was mentioned nine times by nine people. When they mentioned being committed to their workplaces, it created feelings of happiness and greater work satisfaction and well-being, than those that did not feel the same level of commitment. Meaningful work also equated to a satisfaction of the type of work being performed. The following examples of meaningful work were provided from the interviews: Daria stated,

> While I enjoy being a manager of people, it is a big responsibility, and I do see differences in how my male counterparts lead compared to how I lead. Some men who are my direct reports do not always feel comfortable with how I make decisions and I can tell they would rather report to a male. I wouldn't change being a leader in my organization for anything, and I find it to be the most fulfilling work.

Lakshmi stated,

> I rarely feel the pressures of choosing between work and home anymore. Work is so fulfilling. I have forgiven myself for feeling guilty for sending my child to daycare, and working late. Each of us have our own way of navigating stress and making career decisions. I am comfortable with my career choices, and my employer.

Faith. Given the spiritual and religious nature of almost all of the women interviewed for this project, faith was the linchpin and a key factor for how these women chose to live their lives and raise their children. Roughly 60% turned to faith later in life for various reasons; for some it was due to loss of a spouse or a parent, and for others, it was relying on and believing in a higher power than self. Prayer was a recurring theme within the node of faith. Faith was mentioned seven times by ten women. Within the theme of faith, mentors and managing the demands of others also came up.

Per the demographics chart in Table 1, regarding religious preference, here is what was indicated: Baptist (3), Catholic (2), Christian (8), Church of Christ (3), Jewish (2), Methodist and (2) No response. The belief in a higher power shaped their views about their families, finances, and childrearing practices, qualities of effective employees and leaders. Faith played a large role in many of their lives, as indicated by a few of the responses:

Marcela shared,

> Growing up in a Latina family in Buenos Aires, I was in church every Sunday and twice during the week. We prayed to the Lord for everything, peace, food, family, strength and guidance. My father was a factory worker and my mother a stay at home mom. I had 4 brothers and sisters and we didn't have much. My dad saved every dime to send me to school and I prayed that I would get the best grades and be able to move to the US for a better life after college. I received a full scholarship and was able to help send my youngest sibling to college with the money the family saved. Our faith in the Lord got us through. There isn't any other way we would have made it as a family.

Brigette shared,

> My parents believed I should only wed a Jewish man, raise Jewish children and work for one company. Our religion and our faith was forced on me when I was younger. I

rebelled briefly but came back to it, because it centered me. It gave me the guideposts I

needed to secure stable work, and support my family. I did marry a Jewish man, raise

kids who believed in prayer, and we celebrate all Jewish holidays. My parents

encouraged open mindedness to other religions and other ways of working, and it helped

shape the leader I became.

　　　　Mentor. Having strong mentors helped many of these women achieve their goals.

Mentoring can be defined as the relationship between two people, one more experienced than the

other, that allows the experienced person to help the other work toward goals related to his or her

professional and personal growth (Hewlett et al., 2009). The more experienced person, the

mentor, acts as an adviser, role model, and guide. The less experienced person, the *mentee*, acts

as a student or protégé. Mentors helped women overcome barriers to prevent career derailers.

The strategy of mentoring was mentioned 14 times by 14 sources. The women mainly spoke of

male mentors; however, some women leveraged women they met in networking groups, family,

mothers, former bosses, and a few father figures. A critical strategy included developing others,

which was mentioned 14 times by 10 sources. Many of these women felt that it was their

obligation to help other women navigate their career path, similarly to the way they had been

helped in their careers. Some of these women were mentoring three to five women at a time,

many who lived in other parts of the world. Some worked for the same company as their mentee,

and others mentored women at other companies. Fiona shared,

　　　　I had an opportunity to work outside of the U.S. to take a global assignment and assumed

　　　　my family would not support me. I spoke to a male and female mentor about the

　　　　opportunity and they encouraged me to make a list of the pros and cons. After losing my

　　　　husband tragically, it was time for me to reinvent myself, and start over. I wrote my list

　　　　of pros and cons, and there were very few cons. As long as I could work throughout

benefits department to ensure my children would receive adequate education and my

parents could come and visit frequently, it all seemed very positive to me. I am thankful

to have the close connection with a mentor who reminded me of my self-worth and value

and the importance of taking advantage of doing something new and exciting. Several

years later, I still have no regrets from the opportunity I took to live and work in Japan

for 3 years. I was promoted to a senior vice president, shortly after returning back to the

U.S. I owe my mentors for encouraging me.

Lakshmi admitted.

I never had mentors until I joined the bank. I always wondered how I could demonstrate

to others that I wanted to be mentored. Because of my upbringing I never asked, and was

so grateful when someone came to me and said they wanted to mentor me because they

saw potential in me. It came at a time when I was debating leaving the bank to take

another position in another company. Having someone see something in you that you do

not see in yourself is an amazing feeling. My husband told me I could stay at home full

time, but I didn't want to do that at the time, and I am glad my mentor worked with me

over the next couple of years. My relationship with my mentor lead me to unique

experiences and stretch assignments, and also lead me to a new career within the bank in

commercial lending. My mentor also taught me some strategies on how to cope with a

new child and a marriage that felt like it was beginning to suffer. I will be forever

indebted to my mentor for instilling me in, the necessary coping mechanisms to achieve

the balance I needed to be the best.

Mary said,

Finding someone to emulate and look up to that has what you want or qualities that you

wish to obtain is one of the best strategies any woman aspiring for senior leadership,

could work towards. I also recommend having a good group of friends to have support from.

Daria shared.

I had amazing mentors throughout my career and even through college. There just seemed to always be someone in my corner, cheering me along, telling me everything would be ok. Having a good professional mentor and coach encouraged me to mentor others and gave me the right skill sets to help pull other women along. I only mentor women, and I feel it is biased, but men get mentored all of the time. We need the additional support.

Summary

This study found a total of 68 strategies and within those strategies uncovered many themes that women could use as a framework to break down the barriers of entry in a demanding workforce some of which were primarily dominated by men. The interviews provided the researcher data that was insightful and encouraging.

There were many examples brought forth through these interviews of work strategies that were specific to each person. Some included having a network for support, asking for what they want, finding a mentor, and finding ways to become visible. Every experience was unique to them, and for those who had mentors, they learned a lot of information. They learned what to do better and differently, and what not to try at all. Many women interviewed shared their unique insights from childhood through adulthood. While the study demonstrated the shared experiences of women in the working world, it also shed light on how unique each woman and each experience is. Some of these women battled common challenges of being viewed as a leader, or wanting to grow and stretch beyond their comfort zones. There were no significant differences between those that chose not to work from home and those that did. Some of the

most significant differences were involved feeling isolated from their employers and not feeling like they were a part of the "in crowd." Another interesting factor was engagement and performance. Group A and B although they

Others shared stories of difficult times and had the scars to prove they made it through some very challenging times, some of whom even got divorced during their most trying times of overcoming work life challenges, times that were challenging without their significant others.

Some of these women experienced miscarriages and bounced back, and were able to move forward and take on more work and advanced in their careers. These women proved they were resilient, strong, faithful, and encouraged.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Overview and Summary of the Study

This study explored the motivations, career decisions, and mentoring experienced by women using flexible work practices and who shared their stories and life experiences through their own personal narratives. These women faced many obstacles in corporate settings related to climbing the corporate ladder and the glass ceiling, and at the same time, dealt with families, relationships outside of work, aging parents, as well as how to focus on their well-being. Chapter 1 introduced the study, the problem to be solved, the purpose of the study, and introduced the life purpose method. Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature on work-life integration, the history of women in the workplace as well as flexible work options for women. Chapter 3 described the life course methodology and included the research design, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, as well as analysis and selection of the sample. Chapter 4 presented the findings on the different experiences and motivational factors women experience when making decisions about work life integration. And this chapter provided a summary of the findings and conclusion from the study.

The 20 women interviewed were a subset for this study from the Digital Women's Project. The subset was comprised of 10 women working from home full time while maintaining full-time corporate jobs and 10 women with flexibility options who chose to work in the office daily. There were 10 of the women who were younger than 50 years old, while ten of the women were over the age of 50. Regarding being an ethnically diverse sample, here is the representation: Filipino (1), African American (7), Caucasian (9), Indian (2) and (1) Latina. The diversity represented was a bonus for the final outcomes of the study as the researcher recognized a small comparison based on nationality/ethnicity. Regarding religious preference, the women of this study indicated: Baptist (3), Catholic (2), Christian (8), Church of Christ (3),

Jewish (2), Methodist and (2) No response. The reported annual income ranged from $57,000 to $275,000. The average salary was $123,000, inclusive of reduced work schedules.

Limitations of the Study

The focus of the study is on women specifically and preferably women who are all currently in flexible work arrangements or who currently have an agreement with their employers. The study is not for entrepreneurs or people in work from home types of roles, but rather jobs that traditionally have been in an office setting, yet have alternative arrangements. The sample size was critical in understanding effective strategies and life perspectives. This study came from a feminist point of view. Feminist researchers tend to choose interviews and qualitative studies to be able to express ideas and to share their stories. Women use this form of research, so the voice of the woman is heard through the research and analysis and not just the researcher themselves.

There are many reviews of qualitative research in which educators believe the data is too subjective, difficult to replicate, generalized, and not transparent yet, it is prominently used in feminist research framework. Also of note, making assumptions on large populations from a small sample size can be inaccurate in many ways (Bryman, 2008). Additionally, the researcher chose only to interview women who lived and worked in the Southeastern region of the United States, primarily in corporate roles and within the age range of 35-55.

Caring for aging parents was a recurring theme for both groups. Group A cited the excitement of having the flexibility to work remotely and often work from a parent's home in a different state. It was confirming to hear through the interviews and anecdotal information shared that each woman had experiences in common with another, including being grateful for working for an organization that values work life flexibility.

Another recurring theme for both groups was the family relying on the mother's income and the woman being more educated than her husband (in most cases having a graduate degree). In many cases, for those who had children and wanted to take extended time off to spend with them, the women made the choice to go back to work full time more quickly due to the many financial responsibilities of the household.

Education was a high priority in most of the households that these women came from, although there were variations across ethnicity/nationality. It appeared that in African-American, Latino, and Indian household's education was discussed early during childhood and consistently reinforced; whereas, for others, it was not a recurring dinner conversation though certainly assumed in the family lifestyle. The duality of roles integrating both family and work can be pleasing, yet most times disrupted by conflict, stress, and work overload. Pleck (1977) created the phrase *family to work spillage* and that spillage is more predominant in the life of working women than it is in working men.

Findings Related to the Research Questions

The J. A. Giele (2008) framework was utilized to analyze the life experiences of 20 women living in the Southern region of the United States and working in corporate settings. These women all have varying degrees of education and work in high level positions. They responded to questions that centered on the topic of work life flexibility and the intersection of influencers, motivations, and faith. The following question was used to guide the study:

1. What experiences (relationships, professional, and personal) as well as motivational factors shape the life course of women that impact work-family life balance decisions?

This question was applied to Group A and Group B. Per Table 1, Group A is labeled as 1-10 in the chart and Group B is 11-20. Group A worked from home full time and Group B

worked in the office. For Group A, two themes emerged: (a) The choice to work from home oftentimes forces lifestyle or a mindset change, which can be the result of being proactive or reactive to circumstances, and (b) working from home can create social isolation and a disconnectedness from the inner workings of the company, which can lead to sadness and even depression. As the result of working from home either full time or being able to but choosing not to, Group B had compelling reasons to examine their drive and motivation. Due to being proactive or reactive, often it caused deep reflection about what is important and sometimes resulted in a lifestyle change or deeper connection and commitment to family. Out of a total of 26 strategies, 10 were related to professional and relational styles, and out of those 10, four themes were derived. The primary themes were friendship, mentorship, family, and women's empowerment.

The women's empowerment theme came up in a total of 42 references from 17 sources. The self-perception of confidence levels and desire for support of a spouse or family and friends was a recurring theme. When these women had the support of spouse/s, significant others, and/or girlfriends encouraging their commitment and desires for balance, they felt and demonstrated more self-confident behaviors. Also in this node, the support and respect of family was important as well.

The successful pathway for their children was mentioned nine times by six women; their desire was to provide a balanced life where children could thrive, have access to family members, spend quality time with mom and dad (in the cases where men were present), and get the support they needed.

Empowering their peers and other women in the industry was referenced 23 times by nine sources. The participants who joined women's groups seemed more successful and happy in current work situations. They were also able to increase their confidence.

Confidence was referenced 11 times by eight women and is important to the development of women. The women of this study reported that confidence allowed them to shatter the glass ceiling and create a dynamic of asking for what they want. They, then, had friends to encourage them to achieve these goals. Having good friends that empowered women to take that extra course or that new job opportunity was an advantage, and that is why setting goals was referenced 12 times by six women. Some of the participants did not receive that support from their family and needed it from their colleagues, friends, and women's support groups. Confidence was a theme throughout. In many cases, women opted out of being promoted or considered for more senior positions because they did not see any other female role models above them in roles they wished to attain. For that reason, they described being okay as the director, in spite of their male counterparts being elevated to VP and above titles. Research has cited that women like to see others pave the way, which serves as a motivating factor that women can have it all (Sandberg, 2013).

With so many describing the needs to be the primary provider for child care and other domestic responsibilities, many sacrifices were made to keep the family together, which meant sacrificing the career. One example was a spouse deciding to stay home and moving from a dual-income family to a single income family but realizing the benefit of savings with child care. What similarities and differences exist, if any, between women who opted for a flexible schedule and those who chose not to pursue flexible options?

For Group B, one clear theme emerged about how competing priorities impacted the motivation and goals for those who are striving to achieve work-life balance; for example, challenges regarding aging parents often resulted in unexpected lifestyle choices, such as moving parents into elder care facilities or moving kids to or out of private school, negotiating various work arrangements within the office setting, and taking advantage of having ample vacation.

Many of these factors impacted drive and motivation. Women in both groups experienced the financial challenge of having a spouse downsize their job to allow his wife to take on a larger role in the company or to accommodate family and child needs. Additionally, faith was a commonly expressed value as many women mentioned the importance of being grounded and centered in their religion. It was one opportunity each week for which the family would have fellowship and worship together and Sundays (in most cases) was a sacred day of relaxation where work was not done and the focus was on family.

The family structure was a recurring theme throughout. There was a lot of focus on children and ensuring the right schools for them, including and up to moving into a new home 15 miles away simply to ensure the children were in the right school system with the best teachers. The education node was referenced 12 times and there were various stories about education of the women interviewed as well as education of children and supporting the spouse or significant other during their educational endeavors. Many women also discussed their disappointment and frustration with various K-12 education systems up to the point that they wanted to home school or send their children to private school.

It was striking to see the types of sacrifice these women made for their families. As an example, one woman moved her household three times to ensure the child was in the right school district. In some of the working in the office cases with group B, three of the 10 women had husbands who stayed at home during the day or worked in the home and had their own businesses, which oftentimes allowed them to travel with their spouses, pick up kids from school, and perhaps even get dinner started. The role of the significant other or spouse seemed to play a very big role in how successful these women felt. The more support that was provided by the significant other, the more successful the woman felt, and the more confidence she seemed to have in her work set up.

Another recurring theme for both groups was the family relying on the mother's income and the woman being more educated (in most cases having a graduate degree). In many cases, for those who had children and wanted to take extended time off to spend with their children, they made the choice to go back to work full time more quickly due to the many financial responsibilities of the household. Education was a high priority in most of the households these women came from, although I did find variations across ethnicity/nationality. It appeared that in African-American, Latino, and Indian households education was discussed early during childhood and consistently reinforced; whereas, for others, while assumed, education was not a recurring dinner conversation.

One major difference was the amount of isolation felt amongst those women who worked from home full time compared to those in office settings who were able to be more social, make friends at work, had opportunities to build more trust and get more exposure to leadership. Those who received more exposure often referenced being invited to various events and training opportunities that other women who did not work in the office were not invited to. Four women came from the same company and it was eye-opening to compare their experiences. Their corporate culture was very accepting and supportive of working from home. One woman mentioned being promoted to a director while out on maternity leave, which seems impossible, but she mentioned that her company leverages technology and tools to help keep people engaged. When the researcher compared the stories between the two who worked from home and the two who worked in the office, there were negligible differences in their level of engagement or their performance.

Caring for aging parents was a recurring theme for both groups. Group A cited the excitement in having the flexibility to work remotely and often worked from a parent's home in a different state. It was confirming to hear, through the interviews and anecdotal information

shared, that each woman had experiences in common with another, including being grateful for working for an organization that values work life flexibility

2. What are the relationships between influencers and career goals on the work decision? (i.e. What influenced you to make the decision?)

Many women mentioned that the perspective of their families shaped their decision making especially around the decision of family and work life. The contextual background of their upbringing, culture, faith, developing others, and motivational factors were all key influencers. Culture played a very important role and stood out as a key distinctive influencer. In some cases, family culture, work culture, or the culture of the organization played a big role in the effectiveness in work life decisions.

From a relational perspective, it appeared that developing others was easier to accomplish for those women who worked full time within an office setting than it was for those that worked at home and would have to rely on developing others in more virtual settings. While the world is more global and virtual and people development is happening across borders and across the states, the results of the development can be more easily felt by those who are able to physically see the visible interactions and thus can appropriately attribute those developments to women working in the office. In an article detailing results of a flexibility study done in the United Kingdom, Smith (2014) discussed the notion that women who work from home are less likely to be committed to both their organizations and therefore, less likely to develop others in the company.

The conversations referenced various work strategies that enabled these women to achieve some form of work-life flexibility, which was referenced 10 times by seven sources. Filipovic (2013) wrote that many working women feel the pressures of time and begin to seek out new job opportunities to help with work-life integration. This, then, impacts the gender

imbalance in the primary organization, thus fueling inequity. When women had support from families and friends, they were better able to integrate home and work life easier.

Findings

Within the findings and categories, six themes emerged:

- Women's Empowerment

- Faith

- Mentor

- Meaningful Work

- Education

- Social Engagement

The literature validated that the lion's share of the child care and domestic responsibilities fall on the mother, regardless of her work responsibilities, travel, and community involvement. Many women also experienced having to manage the demands of their aging parents in addition to managing other aspects of home and work. There appears to be an under-discussed issue of parenting as it pertains to gender roles. It has been referred to as the *expectation gap*. To some extent, there is an expectation that the mother will get up in the middle of the night with the baby, but for some reason, it is a surprise and often celebrated when the father does it.

Many women who were from diverse cultural backgrounds referenced cultural norms and expectations they faced from their families based on traditional gender roles (in this case, Indian and Latin American values). There was an expectation that family would always come first for women, yet Hyun (2014) has suggested that work-life flexibility can influence a culture and shift the dynamics in an organization, if everyone believes in it and understands how to manage it.

The Working Mother Research Institute recently released research regarding the specific needs of men and flexibility. Many will recall the recent admonishment of baseball great Dan Murphy for missing opening day to be with his wife to celebrate the day of his first-born child's birth, which brought more attention to the need for paternity leave for men. More recently, MongoDB's (an application developer), former CEO, Schireson resigned from his position stating difficulties in managing his dual career as father and CEO (Kaufman, 2014). Women in leadership roles have been scrutinized heavily for similar practices, but we heard very little from this male CEO who stepped down to focus more on the needs of his family. Schireson said in a 2015 Huffington post article, "The only way to balance work and family is by stepping back from my job" (Plumb, 2015, p. 4).

Mentoring

Having strong mentors helped many of these women achieve their goals. Mentoring has been defined as the relationship between two people, one more experienced than the other, that allows the experienced person to help the other work toward goals related to his or her professional and personal growth ("Mentoring," 2016). Oftentimes, participants for the next big assignment, or a leadership program, or nomination to participate in a new coaching or mentoring program are determined by *high-potential* lists gathered through various resources in corporate organizations (Lewis, 2001). For the women of this study, mentors and role models played a significant role. We usually imagine mentors focused on training and teaching on job specific tasks; however, many women mentioned using their mentor to understand different options for child care or elder care. Also, advice was given on how to deal with specific situations with the spouse or significant other, or requesting a short leave for baby bonding. In many cases, the mentoring relationships helped on the personal side as well as the professional aspect of work.

Meaningful Work

Meaningful work is valued by most people yet that value is expressed in different ways. In this study, a balanced life, sustainable commitment to the work, and fulfillment is key to a balanced life for women in corporate settings. The meaningful work node for this study (see Table 3) was referenced 16 times by 10 people. Many women expressed feeling competitive within themselves to obtain certain goals by a certain time or a competitive advantage that instilled within them the commitment to maintain loyalty to their employers who had invested so much time and development in them. Commitment to work was mentioned nine times by nine people. When they mentioned being committed to their workplaces, it created feelings of happiness and greater work satisfaction and well-being than for those who did not feel the same level of commitment. Meaningful work also equated to a satisfaction in the type of work being performed.

Faith

Per the demographics chart in Table 1, the women of this study represented a variety of religious faiths. The following list shows the breakdown for this study and the women of the study regarding religious preference: Baptist (3), Catholic (2), Christian (8), Church of Christ (3), Jewish (2), Methodist and (2) No response. The belief in a higher power shaped the views of most of these women about their families, finances, and how to raise children and be effective employees and leaders. Faith played a large role in many of their lives. Faith was the cornerstone and a key contributor for how most of these women chose to live their lives and raise their children. Roughly 60% turned to faith later in life for various reasons; for some, it was due to loss of a spouse or a parent, and for others, it was relying on and believing in a higher power than self. Prayer was a recurring theme within the node of faith. Faith was mentioned seven times by

10 women. Within the theme of faith, mentors and managing the demands of others also was mentioned and discussed.

Education

The education node was referenced 12 times and there were a few different stories about education both for the women interviewed and their kid's education. A couple of the women even described supporting their spouses during their own educational needs. Many women also discussed their disappointment and frustration with various K-12 education systems to the point that they wanted to home school or send their children to a private school. One sub-strategy that was referenced was self-education. Some of the women spoke about taking education into their own hands and ensuring their academic setting when they were younger would enable them to achieve wealth, in some cases, as their parents had, or in ways they wished their parents could provide for them.

In the future, it would be beneficial to conduct research in non-corporate settings and to get into different regions of the United States and abroad to understand how challenges and influencers may be experienced across various industries and regions of the world. It would also be interesting to compare and contrast different industries. These different areas of professional working environments may have different policies and practices to support work life balance than other consumer driven organizations; also, banks or hospitals could be considered for research where more face-to-face service is expected and required.

When women were interviewed, they would mention that their spouses or significant others were also very interested in this topic and that male workers often are overlooked on the topic of work life flexibility. One male said he had asked human resources to consider enhancing the paternity leave policy for males to have more time for baby bonding. Another interesting opportunity for this research is to determine to what extent, if any, males are looking for flexible

work practices in the same way women are. A comparison between the needs of each gender could add value to the body of this work.

Conclusion

While a great deal of research has been done on the topic of work-life balance, there have not been many comparative studies conducted to address the differences between women who work from home versus women who do not, specifically, looking at career trajectories and motivational factors also primarily working in corporate settings. This study primarily focused on the influencers, similarities, and differences between women who worked for large corporations and still worked from home every day, compared to women who worked in an office full time. Other researchers, such as Creswell have been interested in this theme. Creswell (2009) discussed a social construct that describes the idea of people trying to find meaning around them, particularly around work and home life. The correlation between the Creswell study and this study is the intersection of finding passion, and navigating the integration of work and home. This qualitative study leveraged questions written in an open-ended style through verbal interviews through the phone and face to face in a trusted environment to help uncover the social constructs dictated by experiences, family, faith, and motivations.

The primary differences the woman who were interviewed experience was the lack of connection and visibility of Group A, compared to group B who felt very visible. Some of the other differences, included the women in Group B having to rely more on family and spouses due to being in the office all day. They needed greater support with childcare, than the women in group B. The women in group A seemed to rely on faith a bit more; although, faith and spirituality was a common theme for both. Women in group A seemed to be content with their arrangements, but they were no less motivated or ambitious than women in group B. In fact, in many cases, ambition came up with Group A more than B, as did the need for mentors. It seemed

the women in Group B who were more visible were able to naturally secure sponsors, and

mentors in the office. It was a part of everyday conversations as they "ran into" senior women

and men in the halls, while the less visible Group A had to seek it out, and ask for sponsors.

Overall, there were more similarities than differences, both groups rely in family and

spouses/significant others in various ways, both struggle to balance and juggle life and work

priorities. Both prioritize work and family in ways that make their individual situations work and

what was most noticeable, is work life is very individual. No two people in the study had the

exact same situation; some had kids in elementary; some had a new born; some had senior level

roles in the company; and some were middle management. While their needs varied, their coping

skills, need for networks and resources provided a common platform for them to meet others like

themselves

The Giele life course framework (2008) helped to uncover the life stories and motivations

of 20 working women in the southern region of the United States. The 20 women shared

engaging stories about themselves. There were a total of 26 strategies that these women could

use to breathe life into their work-life situations. From those 26 strategies, six themes emerged.

While these themes were very helpful, it was the sub-strategy norms that made the stories very

special.

While there is no one resolution to solve the many varied challenges of work life balance

that is experienced by women across the world, it has helped add to the body of research on this

topic and can aide in finding more solutions and strategies to help women manage these two

important areas of their lives.

Various support mechanisms can make the phenomena of work-life balance less

challenging, such as mentors, faith, education, family, community, and meaningful careers.

Making wise choices are also critical during this time due to the stress women are up against

during these very difficult times. Understanding all of the options and having corporate commitment to create the best scenario for both the woman requiring flexibility, as well as the company is also key. In other words, if a role is defined as full-time; however, someone in the role wants to work a reduced schedule, it is important to determine the strategy that will best work for the individual and the organization.

There are many ways employers can learn from the findings and strategies shared by these women. From a practitioner perspective, employers might consider looking at their paternity leave programs. They may find, that enhancing the amount of programs and policies such as leave of absence and paternity leave, by just a couple of weeks, would help with retention and serve as an attractor for fathers. Additionally, companies can examine their work from home policies, ensure people managers know how to have conversations with both women and men who ask to work on flexible work arrangements, including talking points, maternity leave guidance and providing a buddy or partner to a woman going on leave to help her stay connected to the company while out.

Finally, companies should also review their technology capabilities to ensure they are organizationally prepared to support remote workers. For example, some organizations now allow their employees to have work applications on iPhone, Androids, and tablets. This better enables work to get done from anywhere.

All in all, work life strategies are critical for companies to embrace and leverage for all workers, regardless of level. Flexibility is for everyone.

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APPENDIX A

Invitation Letter to Participate

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a doctoral research study I am conducting at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University. The title of the study is – "A Phenomenological Study of Women in the Workplace, and Work-Life Integration".

My academic and scholarly commitment is based on over two decades of Human Resources and Diversity and Inclusion advocacy, specifically targeting inclusion, and the empowerment of women in private sector organizations. In particular, discussions and research on the topic of work-life balance are gaining momentum and seen as a pillar of inclusion. Furthermore, it also is a strategic effort on the national agenda of key thought leaders including First Lady Michelle Obama who identified it as a priority.

While all women struggle with issues related to work-life conflict, women who work in corporate settings, and work from home full time, also have stories to share, despite evidence that work is a significant domain in their lives, researchers have limited information about their career experiences or how they integrate the world of work with their personal lives. The study of work-life balance is important for three primary reasons; to challenge previously accepted discourses of work and scholarship related to this topic that were based on one demographic perspective; to incorporate new thinking and understanding of the historical and socio-economic impact of balancing work and family and to contribute to a significant knowledge gap in research related to work-life balance in Corporate settings.

My research study will follow the life story method. I shall conduct interviews via The Digital Women's Project through phone interviews with female subjects that are serving in leadership roles in an array of financial institutions. It is anticipated that the interview will require about 60 minutes of your time. You will be sent the questions in advance and will be scheduled for a 60 minute interview with me either via phone or in person. Each conversation will be recorded in an effort to cite specific quotes for the dissertation. Your name will be coded so that your responses will be confidential and anonymous. The timeframe for this study to begin is April 2015. All individuals that participate in this study will receive a copy of the findings if interested.

I hope you will consider this invitation to participate in the study and please know that your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with any other entity. Thank you in advance for your help. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Sincerely,

Christal Morris

Doctoral Candidate - Organization Change Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Pepperdine University

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

Socio-demographic Questions:

Birth Date _____

Place of Birth _____

Country of Residence _____

Education level _____

Occupation _____

Income_____

Marital Status _____ Marital Status Year_____

Spouse (partner) birth date _____

 Husband's (partner's) education and occupation _____

Children (gender and year of birth) _____

Mother's education and occupation _____

Father's education and occupation _____

Religious Background _____

Number of People living in your household _____

Number of generations living in your household _____

Instrument Interview:

Question #1. [Early adulthood]

About the period in your life immediately after college or your early twenties. What was your major, name of your college, and year of graduation, what about graduate education? What did you think you would like to become in terms of occupation and type of lifestyle or family life....What were you thinking then and how did things actually turn out.

Question #2 [Childhood and adolescence]

Thinking of the period in your life before college and the goals that you and your family held for you, what was your family's attitude toward women's education and you going to college and

what you would become? What was the effect of your parents' education, presence of brothers and sisters, family finances, involvement in a faith community, family expectations? How was your education different from or similar to that of your parents and brothers and sisters?

Question #3 [Adulthood – current]

Since college, what kinds of achievement and frustration have you experienced? What type of mentors have you had? What has happened that you didn't expect-in employment, family, faith, further education? Has there been job discrimination, children, a separation or divorce, health problems of yourself or a family member? What about moves, membership in the community, faith community, housing problems, racial integration, job loss? And feelings about yourself? Have there been good things such as particular rewards, satisfaction, or recognition?

Question #4 [Adulthood-future]

Looking back at your life from this vantage point, and ahead to the future, what are your main concerns? What are your goals, hopes and dreams for the next few years? What problems do you hope to solve? Looking further out, where do you hope to be a few years from now with respect to work or finishing graduate school, family, faith, community, mentors, health, finances, etc.?

Question #5 [Strategies for balancing life]

What coping strategies do you use to respond to concerns related to the plurality of roles? Have you ever felt pressured to choose between work and home? What made you think that you could do both successfully? Do you feel that your family life or work life have suffered because of your involvement in work or family? Have you felt any guilt related to either family or work? Are there times that you felt particularly successful at juggling the demands of both work and home? Why? Were you prepared for the demands of work and life balance? Why or why not? What strategies do you implement in your own life in order to remain balanced?

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

Because we value your right to make an informed decision to participate in the TDWP, we must

have your consent before we accept a submission. Please click the following link to read the Consent

Form. Then you will select the consent to participate to affirm that you have read and agreed to the

terms of the information provided in the consent.

Please read this form carefully before returning to the TDWP submission form to share your story. By clicking one Submit button on the TDWP submission form, you will affirm that you have read this form and agree to its terms.

The Pepperdine University Consent to Contribute

Project Title:
The Digital Women's Project: Work-Life Balance Issues for Women

Project Director:
Dr. Margaret J. Weber
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Pepperdine University
6100 Center Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90045
310.568.5600

This is a consent form for contributing to the Digital Women's Project: Work-Life Balance Issues for Women (TDWP). It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to contribute. All contributions are voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to email Professor Margaret J. Weber (dwproject@pepperdine.edu) or write with questions (Professor Margaret j. Weber, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90045) before making your decision whether or not to contribute. If you decide to contribute to the TDWP after reading this document, we assume you have agreed to the terms of this consent form.

Purpose:
Women are making important strides in education, careers, and influencing the global economy, while at the same time nurturing families. This is a study to learn about the life stories of women globally.   The Purpose of this study is to establish a global project of women's lives and is threefold:
1.   What experiences (identity, relationship style, drive and motivation, and adaptive) shape the life course of women that impact work-family life balance decisions?
2.   How do socio-demographic variables (education, age, country of residence, family composition, profession, marital status, spouse education and profession) influence work-family life balance decisions?
3.   What are the relationships between influencers (family background, mentoring and faith) and career goals on work-family life balance decisions?

The results of this research study have significance for women and men, as well as organizations as we seek to understand more about the work-family life balance issues facing individuals and families today. The results could help in providing women with better understanding of coping strategies both for work and family life; policies that might be more family friendly; as well

as contribute to the body of knowledge that supports women pursuing their dreams. Such an archive has great value as a historical, cultural, and educational record. We want to make it possible for women to contribute their study and have it recorded as part of this record.

The TDWP is designed to collect women's stories of their life journeys to understand how they balance their life activities and to store these in a permanent collection which scholars interested in issues of women and work-life balance can access, study, and learn from.

Procedures/Tasks:
If you wish to become a contributor to the TDWP project, you can let your researcher know and they will set up time to interview by phone. Your interview will be audiotaped.

Before you submit your story, you will be to affirm your intent to contribute by posting your story on our website where the stories will be made available to scholars and graduate students who are interested in women and work-life balance issues. You can indicate if you wish your story to be private or public. Either way, you can indicate that you do not wish your name to be associated with your story and it can be anonymous.   You can respond in your native language or respond in English. If you choose to respond in your native language your story will be transcribed into English for research purposes.

Duration:
We estimate that responding to the questions of your life history will take approximately one hour depending on how much time you choose to take. The amount of time you spend on your responses is entirely up to you.

The intent of the TDWP is to provide stories of amazing women and how they approach life for balancing the many activities for use by scholars in perpetuity.

Risks and Benefits:
After you register with TDWP and submit a narrative about your life story using our online registration and submission forms, only TDWP Director and her graduate students will have access to your name and e-mail address. This information will only be used to contact you about your submission. When you submit your responses, you can choose to have the information publicly available or for it to be private for the researcher and her graduate students only.

You should not include any information that will put you or others at risk when it is made public on the site.

Anyone interested in issues of women and the way in which they cope and balance work-life activities stand to gain a great deal about the issues and strategies that women use daily to respond to life and their journey. With stories from women globally, one can begin to understand the various struggles, the accomplishments, and the contributions that women are making to globally.

Incentives:
By contributing your life journey narrative to the TDWP, your story will become part of a public archive that has great value to scholars and to the public as a historical, cultural, and educational record.

Contributors' Rights:
You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without it affecting your relationship with any entity.

You can choose whether to not to allow your personal contact information to be made public and associated with your story. You can also decide not to answer any questions regarding personal information that are presented on the TDWP submission forms. However, once you have submitted your responses to the research questions on the TDWP website and agreed that it can be publicly posted, the information you have provided cannot be removed from the TDWP.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects at the Pepperdine University reviewed this project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of contributors.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the project you may contact Dr. Margaret J. Weber, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310.568.5600 or dwproject@pepperdine.edu.

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For questions about your rights as a contributor to this project or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Dr. Yuying Tsong, IRB Chairperson at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology (yuying.tsong@pepperdine.edu or call at 310.568.5600).

Contributing to the study:
I affirm that I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to contribute to an archival project. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to contribute to this project.

After you have read this form, please close your window and return to the TDWP submission process to respond to the study questions!

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study is to explore the narratives of women's lives as they balance their work activities with the demands of motherhood and or marriage/relationships. It is to understand how professional career women's lives are changing. To accomplish this, we are interviewing females in leadership roles in the financial industry.

This interview will take about an hour. You will begin with reading the consent form and once you continue you will be giving consent to participate in the study. The questions at the beginning are very brief to get a snapshot of you, your present work, your education, and your living arrangements. Then there will be four big questions that are designed to help you recall several different periods of your life. I would like for you to tell me what stands out as being significant about them. Most people find this an interesting and enjoyable process. If, however, at any time you would rather not answer, you are free to decline.

In order to continue with the interview, we need your written consent on this form, which has been approved by the IRB at Pepperdine University, and which assures you that there is no major risk to you in answering any of the questions. If you are uncomfortable with any question, you may decline to answer it, and you may terminate the interview at any time for any reason. The interviewer goes over the form with the respondent and answers any questions. Interviewer collects the form and sends a copy with the interviewee.

Background Questions:

I would like for you to fill out some basic information about yourself on this form that will accompany the interview. It includes information about occupation, marital status, age, etc. The interview instrument:

Question 1. [Early adulthood]

About the period in your life immediately after college or. Your early twenties. What was your major, name of your college, and year of graduation, what about graduate education? What did you think you would like to become in terms of occupation and type of lifestyle or family life. ...What were you thinking then and how did things actually   turn out.

Question 2 [Childhood and adolescence]

Thinking of the period in your life before college and the goals that you and your family held for you, what was your family's attitude toward women's education and you going to college and what you would become? What was the effect of your parents' education, presence of brothers and sisters, family finances, involvement in a faith community, family expectations? How was your education different from or similar to that of your parents and brothers and sisters?

Question 3 [Adulthood–current]

Since college, what kinds of achievement and frustration have you experienced? What type of mentors have you had? What has happened that you didn't expect-in employment, family, faith, further education? Has there been job discrimination, children, a separation or divorce, health problems of yourself or a family member? What about moves, membership in the community, faith community, housing problems, racial integration, job loss? And feelings about yourself? Have there been good things such as particular rewards, satisfaction, or recognition?

Question 4 [Adulthood-future]

Looking back at your life from this vantage point, and ahead to the future, what are your main concerns? What are your goals, hopes and dreams for the next few years? What problems do you hope to solve? Looking further out, where do you hope to be a few years from now with respect to work or finishing graduate school, family, faith, community, mentors, health, finances, etc.?

Question 5 [Strategies for balancing life]

What coping strategies do you use to respond to concerns related to the plurality of roles? Have you ever felt pressured to choose between work and home? What made you think that you could do both successfully? Do you feel that your family life or work life have suffered because of your involvement in work or family? Have you felt any guilt related to either family or work? Are there times that you felt particularly successful at juggling the demands of both work and home? Why? Were you prepared for the demands of work and life balance? Why or why not? What strategies do you implement in your own life in order to remain balanced?

APPENDIX E

Thank You Letter

Thank You Letter to be sent after Initial Interest in the Study

Dear

Thank you for expressing interest as a potential participant in the study on work- family life balance issues for women that I am conducting as a part of my doctoral research study at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University.

The study of work-life balance among women in Corporate settings is important for three primary reasons; to challenge previously accepted discourses of work and scholarship related to this topic that were based on one demographic perspective; to incorporate new thinking and understanding of the historical and socio-economic impact of juggling work and family and to contribute to a significant knowledge gap in research related to work-life balance in corporate settings.

I will contact you shortly via email to send you an invitation for a one hour meeting with me, which will be held either in person or by phone. Please schedule a date and time best for you that will allow for little or no interruption because it will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without it affecting your relationship with any other entity.

Thank you again in advance for your interest. If you have questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact me by telephone at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxxxxxxxxx. If you would like to receive verification of your participation in the study, I am able to provide that upon request.

Sincerely,

Christal L. Morris

Doctoral Candidate and Researcher Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

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APPENDIX F

Course Integration

EDOL Course Integration	Course Instructor
EDOL 714: Organizational Behavior Theory & Design	Rhodes
EDOL 740: Personal Leadership	Weber
EDOL 729: Information Literacy and Scholarship	Davis
EDOL 700: Leadership Theory and Practice	Madjidi
EDOL 724: Ethical Leadership and Social Justice	Hyatt
EDOL 734A: Data Analysis and Interpretation	Madjidi
EDOL 754A: Economic and Political Systems	Madjidi
EDOL 754B: International Policy Experience	Schmeider
EDOL 758A: Consultancy Project	Harvey
EDOL 734B: Data Analysis and Interpretation	Madjidi
EDOL 756: Leading Educational Programs	Allen
EDOL 758B: Consultancy Project	Harvey
EDOL 730A: Research Methods and Evaluation	Leigh
EDOL 759: Law and Dispute Resolution	Tobin
EDOL 762: Transforming Organization in a Global Community	Schmeider
EDOL 730B: Qualitative Research and Analysis	Davis
EDOL 757: Entrepreneurship	Caesar
EDOL 753A: Management and Policy Development	McManus
EDOL 753B: National Policy Experience	McManus
EDOL 787: Comprehensive Examination	McManus

APPENDIX G

IRB Exemption

PEPPERDINE IRB
Application for a Claim of Exemption

Date: 04/15/2015   IRB Application/Protocol #: E0719F03-AM2013-01

Principal Investigator: Christal L Morris
	Faculty	Staff	Student	Other	
School/Unit:	GSBM	**GSEP**	Seaver	SOL	SPP
	Administration		Other:		

Faculty Supervisor: **Margaret Weber**   *(if applicable)*
School/Unit:	GSBM	**GSEP**	Seaver	SOL	SPP
	Administration		Other:		

Telephone (work): (310) 568-5616
Email Address: margaret.weber@peperdine.edu   .

Project Title: Women in the Workplace and Work Life Integration:

A Phenomenological study

Type of Project (Check all that apply):
Dissertation	Thesis
Undergraduate Research	Independent Study
Classroom Project	Faculty Research
Other:	

    Is the Faculty Supervisor Review Form attached? **Yes**   No   N/A

    Has the investigator(s) completed education on research with human subjects? **Yes**
No Please attach certification form(s) to this application.

    Investigators are reminded that Exemptions will NOT be granted for research involving prisoners, fetuses, pregnant women, or human in vitro fertilization. Also, the exemption at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2), for research involving survey or interview procedures or observations of public behavior, does not apply to research with children (Subpart D), except for research involving observations of public behavior when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed.

1.   Briefly summarize your proposed research project, and describe your
        research goals/objectives.

    This project will explore the competing narratives of women's lives as they balance their
career with the demands of marriage and motherhood. The ultimate goal is to understand the
work life balance issues of women between the ages of 25-60 in Corporate settings who have
both selected to work in flexible work arrangements and women who considered flexible
arrangements and opted not to pursue them. The study will acquire information on their
motivations and influencers and the impact their decisions have had on their opportunities to
pursue leadership roles. Many women choose to delay marriage and parenthood because of work
potential. Others opt for parenthood and the growth of their children before pursuing their work .
Still others plan for dual roles of education, career, and motherhood.

    Research Questions for the study:

        1.   What experiences (relationships, professional and personal) as well as

                motivational factors shape the life course of women in Corporate settings

                that pursue or choose not to pursue a flexible schedule, and how have the

                experiences impacted work-life integration decisions?

        2.   What similarities and differences exist, if any, between women who opted

                for a flexible schedule and those who chose not to pursue flexible options?

        3.   What are the relationships between influencers and career goals related to

                flexible work decisions (i.e., "What influenced you to make the decision to

                pursue or not pursue a flexible schedule?")

        The life course method will be used for the narrative interviews. The interview
    will consist of approximately 1 hour individual interview which will focus on five
    major questions related to their life history.

2.   Using the categories found in Appendix B of the Investigator Manual, list the category of

        research activity that you believe applies to your proposed study.

    The proposed research activity involves a one-time interview with an adult female
population that is not a protected group. The interview does not ask for information that can link

the participant to her data. The study does not present more than minimal risk to the participants. The disclosure of the data outside of the study would not place the participants at risk of civil/criminal liability or damage to their financial standing, employability, or reputation, and no deception is used. Therefore, it appears this study is exempt based on 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2).

1.   Briefly describe the nature of the involvement of the human subjects (observation of student behavior in the classroom, personal interview, mailed questionnaire, telephone questionnaire, observation, chart review, etc):

The life story method will be used for the narrative interviews. This framework identifies several time periods that impact one's life path, from childhood and adolescence, early adulthood, present life circumstances, and future aspirations. The narrative/life-story is foundational to this study by reflecting upon the changes, adaptations, and life transitions of women in Corporate settings. The population for this study will be women ages 25-60 who work in Corporate settings and either work flexible schedules (work from home, part time, or on a reduced schedule, as well as women who have considered those options. These women can live anywhere in the world. An electronic letter will be sent to women who meet these qualifications. The sample will be derived through respondent-driven sampling sometimes referred to as snowball sampling which is a technique for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball. It was believed that it was impossible to make unbiased estimates from snowball samples, but a variation of snowball sampling called respondent-driven sampling has been shown to allow researchers to make asymptotically unbiased estimates from snowball samples under certain conditions. The researcher works in a Corporate setting and works with various women's and working parents organizations and will have access to some of the participants through her work. Additionally, the researcher has access to various social networks and former employers, colleagues and friends who have expressed interest in participating in the study. The individuals selected for this study will be volunteers who respond to the formal invitation to participate in the study.

An invitation letter to participate in the study will be administered to the subject which has a clear description of the study and it can be reviewed in Appendix A. These interviews are being drawn from a sample of women in Corporate settings; therefore, the subjects will experience both live in person, or phone interviews. I will ask if I can record the information, or will note written responses.

Given these are either by phone or in-person, the researcher will schedule time that is conducive for the participant, to speak for one hour to conduct the interview. The subjects will also be asked to answer some questions regarding their demographic background that can be viewed in Appendix B. The interview protocol in Appendix D notifies the participant that the study is voluntary.

The subjects will be contacted via email or in person and once they continue the subjects will have agreed to the terms of the interview. The informed consent is to protect both the interviewer and the subjects; a copy can be viewed in Appendix C. It is also reinforces the voluntary nature of the study. Once subjects complete the interview process, the researcher will compile all data from the interview, along with the informed consent. A copy of the interview questions can be viewed in Appendix B. To protect the subjects, theinterviews will be structured with the utilization of a pseudonym as an identifier. This will protect the anonymity of the subjects while coding. This will also allow the researcher to match the socio-demographic information. When quoted in the literature the researcher will solely use the pseudonym and this will protect the participants further. This will also help uncover any underlying themes between the data. Once interviews are confirmed a thank you letter for agreeing to participate will be sent to the participant

and a sample can be viewed in AppendixE.

Since some of the interviews will take place in person and some by phone all participants will not be anonymous to the researcher. However, the participants' responses and their information will remain confidential and anonymous in the written study and will not be identified. Participants will be assigned a random pseudonym to maintain anonymity. Little to no contact of participants will occur after the interview unless the researcher needs clarification or participants indicate they request a final copy of this specific research.

2.   Explain why you think this protocol should be considered exempt. Be sure to address all known or potential risks to subjects/participants.

There will be minimal risk to the subjects. Participation in the study is voluntary and the individual responses will not be identified in the research study.

The population for this study will be approximately 25 professional Corporate women working in Fortune 500 companies. The participant responses will not be identified in the research study. A pseudonym will be used by the researcher for coding

purposes and to organize the data, and will be used to identify participant in the final results of the research study. Instructions to participants will include a statement that they can stop at any point in the survey or at any time are free to decline to answer.

3.   Explain how records will be kept.

Individuals will respond via live interviews or recorded phone interviews. There will be no identifying information collected (refer to Project Approval # E0719F03-AM2013-01 for similar projects. The interviews will be transferred to a word document, with all files being kept in a password protected computer. The documents will also be stored digitally using Google Docs as a backup, only accessible to the researcher with password access. The computer is the personal computer of the researcher, and the researcher is the only one who has access to the password. When not in use, the computer will be stored in a locked cabinet in the home of the researcher. Participants will be asked if quotes can be used in the dissertation through the use of pseudonyms. Use of NVivo software to analyze the data will be used solely by the researcher, who will have a personal account and subscription, and will be password protected. Once the data is transferred to NVivo, it will be identified by psyudonym only. The data will be stored for five years and then destroyed.

Yes No Are the data recorded in such a manner that subjects can be identified by a name or code? If yes:

- Who has access to this data and how is it being stored?

    Data will be recorded and transcribed using an Iphone. The transcribed document will be stored in Google Docs and then NVivo, both on the researcher's password-protected personal computer. The recording will be deleted. No tapes will be involved. It will only be available to the researcher and will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home when not in use.

- If you are using a health or mental health assessment tool or procedure, what is your procedure for referring the participant for follow-up if his/her scores or results should significant illness or risk? Please describe.

    N/A

- Will the list of names and codes be destroyed at the end of the study? Explain your procedures.

All digital documents will be deleted from any cloud storage or computer hardware, and any paper documentation or data, such as informed consent or demographic data will be shredded, after the required time period for data storage (5 years).

7. Attach a copy of all data collection tools (e.g., questionnaires, interview questions or scripts, data collection sheets, database formats) to this form. Be sure to include in such forms/scripts the following information:

    · a statement that the project is research being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a course, master's thesis, dissertation, etc. (if applicable)

    · purpose of study

    · a statement that subjects' responses will be kept anonymous or confidential (explain extent of confidentiality if subjects' names are requested)

    · if audio taping or videotaping, a statement that subject is being taped (explain how tapes will be stored or disposed of during and after the study)

    · a statement that subjects do not have to answer every question

    · a statement that subject's class standing, grades, or job status (or status on an athletic team, if applicable) will not be affected by refusal to participate or by withdrawal from the study (if applicable)

    · a statement that participation is voluntary

    Please note that your IRB may also require you to submit a consent form or an **Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Procedures form.** Please contact your IRB Chairperson and/or see the IRB website for more information.

8. Attach a copy of permission forms from individuals and/or organizations that have granted you access to the subjects.

    N/A

9. Yes   **No**   Does your study fall under HIPAA? Explain below.

9.1 If HIPAA applies to your study, attach a copy of the certification that the investigator(s) has completed the HIPAA educational component. Describe your procedures for obtaining Authorization from participants. Attach a copy of the Covered Entity's HIPAA Authorization and Revocation of Authorization forms to be used in your study (see Section XI. of the Investigator Manual for forms to use if the CE does not provide such forms). If you are seeking to use or disclose PHI without Authorization, please attach the **Application for Use or Disclosure of PHI Without Authorization** form (see Section XI). Review the HIPAA procedures in Section X. of the Investigator Manual.

I hereby certify that I am familiar with federal and professional standards for conducting research with human subjects and that I will comply with these standards. The above information is correct to the best of my knowledge, and I shall adhere to the procedure as described. If a change in procedures becomes necessary I shall submit an amended application to the IRB and await approval prior to implementing any new procedures. If any problems involving human subjects occur, I shall immediately notify the IRB Chairperson.

_____ _____ June 9, 2015

Principal Investigator's Signature   Date

Margaret J Weber   June 11, 2015

_____   _____

Faculty Supervisor's Signature   Date

(if applicable)

Appendices/Supplemental Material

Use the space below (or additional pages and/or files) to attach appendices or any supplemental materials to this application.

Appendix A: Invitation Letter to Participation

Appendix B: Socio-demographic background questions and Interview questions

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Appendix E: Thank you letter to those agreeing to participate in the study Dissertation Proposal