

Diapers and Dissertations: An Exploration of Doctoral and Postdoctoral Trainee
Decision-Making Surrounding First-Time Parenthood

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

While published literature over the past several decades has related the perspectives of established academic mothers, decidedly less attention has been devoted to the topic of parenthood among trainees at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels. With increasing numbers of women and men entering postgraduate training in Canada each year—many at an age when the average Canadian is contemplating having their first child—it seems necessary that trainee voices be added to discussions about family planning and work/life management within the academy. Inspired by my own questioning about the possibility of combining parenthood with graduate training, this study explored the factors that influence first-time parenthood amongst doctoral and postdoctoral trainees. Using a feminist standpoint theory approach to narrative inquiry, I conducted in-depth interviews (both individually and together) with ten heterosexual trainee couples at varying stages of the family planning process to unpack their motivations, concerns, and experiences. Interview data was used to construct women’s, men’s, and at times, shared narratives for each couple—narratives which repeatedly highlighted the ways that the academic and personal realms of their lives could be intertwined. The participant narratives revealed a complex and oftentimes gendered experience of academic training—particularly for women—that impacted leisure behaviours, as well as personal relationships and family decision-making for both trainees and their partners. The narratives also exposed the multitude of factors that can impact family planning for individuals and couples, including personal and/or shared desires, gender roles expectations for both men and women, internal and external pressures, as well as varying constraints and supports. While some of these factors were found to influence both genders (albeit, in different ways), others were found to disproportionately influence women through the promotion of pronatalist ideology and the expected prioritization of emotional labour over academic pursuits. Overall, the parallel female and male narratives in this study showcased unique critical insights into the inner workings of academic trainee relationships, as well as the gendered marginalization frequently experienced by academic trainee women and families. Consequently, the findings from this study can be used to inform university policies designed to assist trainee parents, while also contributing an additional dimension to literature focused on the areas of higher education, family studies, and leisure.

Acknowledgements

Doctoral attrition rates have been a consistent issue in North America for decades, with statistics suggesting that anywhere from 30-50% of doctoral students will fail to complete their programs (Berelson, 1960; Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Ferreira, 2003; Lott, Gardner & Powers, 2009; Lovitts, 2001; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Nettles & Millett, 2006; Sowell, 2009). Consequently, I feel it is important to acknowledge all of the individuals and organizations who have helped to keep me from becoming a part of this statistic. To the couples who participated in this project, thank you for trusting me to bring your stories to light. Without your candor, bravery, and altruism, this project would not have been possible. To my supervisor, Dr. Diana Parry, I extend my deepest gratitude for being such an amazing mentor and for always having my back. Your high standards have helped to make me a better researcher and your patience and guidance have helped me to finally name my own politics. Thank you for always providing an example of what is possible if individuals are willing to speak up and take action. To my committee members—Dr. Troy Glover, Dr. Toni Serafini, Dr. Kelly Anthony, and Dr. Andrea Doucet, thank you for all of the experience and wisdom you have brought to your feedback of my work. To the individuals who supported my research behind the scenes—Sandy Heise, Tracy Taves, and Pauline Raghubir—thank you for your all of your hard work and for always being available to answer my questions. To the organizations who financially supported my studies—SSHRC, OGS, and the University of Waterloo—thank you for helping me to realize my dreams of earning a doctorate. To all of my colleagues in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies—Janet, Kim(s), Carrie, Bronwen, Angela, Mahsa, Tom, and Dan—thank you for your support and solidarity over the years. To my family, thank you for always encouraging my ambitions, no matter how outrageous they might seem. It's easy to take chances when you know you have a safe space to come home to. And finally to my husband Dave, thank you believing in me and for having the courage to support my sharing of our story. We have fought our doctoral battles together and we will see them through together.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Prologue¹

The following is an excerpt from my journal:

Winter, 2011, age 29, 6 months into my PhD

It's been over a month since I took Plan B and still no sign of my period. The package insert had said that I could expect my menstrual cycle to be disrupted, but that I might want to take a home pregnancy test if it doesn't come at all. I can't wait any longer. The walk to the pharmacy is a frigid one, as Dave grumbles about a project at work and I chug a bottle of water, hoping that it will allow me to pee on command. In the dimly lit aisle of the store, we both stare, puzzled, at the selection of pregnancy tests, our heads cocked slightly sideways. Do I need a digital stick... why on earth would the thing need to be digitized? A 'family pack' of six tests? Nope, one should do it. We decide on the store brand test that is on sale...heck, they sell these things at the dollar store now, so how complicated can they really be? When we arrive home, Dave starts dinner while I dart into the washroom. I rip apart the box and diligently follow the test instructions, holding the stick in my stream of urine for the required five seconds. As I count...one one-thousand...two one-thousand...three one-thousand, a peculiar calm washes over me. Suddenly, I find myself feeling okay with whatever the test might say. I set the timer on the stove and Dave and I engage in some distracting chitchat while I watch him cook pasta and wait for the results to appear. I glance around the apartment, wondering if it could accommodate a baby. There would be room for a crib in our bedroom if we got rid of a bookcase, but then again, we could always move to a slightly larger place. I also start to think about whether I would have time for a baby at this point in my life. My classes will be over in a few months, and the flexibility in my academic schedule over the coming years might allow me to be at home more frequently with a child. Unexpectedly, the concept of a baby is not unnerving me in the way it always has in the past. Though unplanned, a baby might not be the end of the world right now. It could, in fact, be the beginning of a whole new one. As the timer on the stove beeps, I sense that my biological clock may be letting me know that 'it's time' as well. I cautiously head back to the bathroom and swear that I can smell a hint of baby shampoo in the air. I peer down at the test. Negative. Part of me is relieved by this knowledge, and it is this part that I share with Dave. Secretly, however, I am disappointed.

¹ The content in sections 1.1, 1.2, and 2.4.1 of this dissertation has been derived, in part, from the following article: Chesser, S. (2015). Maybe, Maybe... PhD Baby? *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, 6(2), 23-36. It is being used with the express permission of the publisher.

1.2 Origins of the Study

A doctoral degree is certainly not an endeavour for the faint of heart. Those of us who choose to pursue this type of educational commitment often restructure our entire lives around our studies and very quickly learn that finances, sleep, leisure time, relationships, and even family planning may need to take a backseat to a hectic academic schedule. Despite these challenges, statistics suggest that roughly 45,000 doctoral students and 9000 postdoctoral trainees undertake academic training each year in Canada (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2013). Their academic marathons—lasting an average of five years and nine months for doctoral students and between three and five years for postdoctoral trainees—will often take many until their mid to late thirties to complete (Mitchell et al., 2013; King, 2008). The personal reasons for pursuing such training are numerous and may include an increased potential for professional mobility, increased future earning potential, a desire to contribute to knowledge production and innovation, and/or the opportunity to immerse oneself in a subject area that holds personal interest (Auriol, 2010; Wendler et al., 2010). Such a knowledge-focused environment, however, can make the decision to simultaneously embark upon the journey of parenthood—one of the most life-changing decisions a human can make—seem unthinkable (Evans & Grant, 2009; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013).

These realities have never been lost on me. Indeed, I have spent a third of my life terrified that I would get pregnant while enrolled in higher education. During my undergraduate degree, it was the fear that I was too young, too immature, and too financially unstable to have a baby that kept me faithfully taking my birth control pills each day. Each month when my period arrived I said a little ‘thank you’ to the higher reproductive powers that be that I had, once again, dodged a baby bullet. Over the past nine years of my graduate school training, it has been my own ambition and my desire to protect my partner Dave’s academic career that have kept even the mere discussion of pregnancy at bay. Throughout it all, I have found myself wondering when (if ever) is the right time to have a child in the academy (i.e. during graduate school, during a postdoctoral fellowship, during the first years of a tenure track position, after achieving tenure).

Before a discussion about children can begin, I feel obligated to explain the circumstances that led to me to even contemplate such a possibility—both in my personal life and with regard to my research work. Dave and I met as undergrads and had been great friends for years before we began dating in 2007, just as I was just starting my master’s degree in Thunder Bay and he was beginning his PhD. in Toronto. We had both recently ended long-term relationships and were not looking to become seriously involved with anyone. Rather than pursuing the quickest path to secure careers, marriage, and children, we instead chose the winding road of postgraduate education and all the sacrifices that it can entail (i.e. small stipends, grubby apartments, and projects that you can mentally never shut off from). We spent the early years of our relationship throwing ourselves into our work, though we made time to speak nightly via phone and Skype and flew back-and-forth to see each other when we could. Thinking back to this time, I recall that many of my master’s course readings, papers, and research assistant duties were often completed cross-legged on the floors of airports or cramped into tiny airplane seats at altitude. To be fair, the geographic distance between us allowed me to achieve a great deal academically, thus enabling my self-esteem to grow through the knowledge that I could indeed ‘hack it’ in graduate school. Over time, however, this distance left me feeling increasingly isolated and lonely. While our relationship arrangement may have been ideal from a productivity perspective, my one-track career mind seemed to create an emotional void and emptiness that only grew with each passing month. Good grades and academic advancement could not laugh with me over a home-cooked meal or spoon with me in bed at night, complaining that my feet were always cold. The academy did not tell me that it loved me every day and it was not the only thing I wanted to build my life around. I began to seriously consider whether Dave might very well be the person that I could consider creating a family with someday. After two years in Thunder Bay and close to the end of my Master’s degree, I had had enough. In the summer of 2009, I packed up my meager graduate student belongings (they literally fit into a minivan) and moved back to Southern Ontario and in with Dave.

In 2013 (at the age of 31), we took the ‘plunge’, so-to-speak, and chose to get married. This decision was at least in part motivated by our knowledge that being officially ‘married’ would make it easier for us to obtain working visas should we decide to pursue postdoctoral

training in the United States or abroad. In many ways, this formalization of our relationship immediately exposed us to social pressure to grow our two-person family in ways we had never encountered before. I don't think our wedding reception was even over before I was asked "*so when can we expect to see you pregnant?*" Over time, these types of questions have just kept coming. "*When are you going to start trying to conceive?*" "*How many kids do you think you might want?*" "*Who would stay home to care for a child?*" Dave and I typically just smile politely and do our best to tactfully dodge such inquiries, knowing full well that we are still wrestling with their answers ourselves.

Choices about when to become a parent are often shaped by one's position in life, and this process is likely no different for those entering postgraduate education. Given that the number of women enrolled in graduate studies in Canada and the United States has been shown to be roughly equal to that of men (e.g. women make up approximately 47% of all doctoral graduates in Canada and over 50% of graduates in the United States), the issue of exactly if or when—for those with parenting desires—to have a child during an academic career has, arguably, become more multidimensional (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2011). For individuals beginning a PhD degree in their early to mid-20s, such decision-making can sometimes be postponed until after graduation. Indeed, such a strategy has been argued to alleviate many of the stresses associated with co-managing the roles of trainee and new parent, which can include strains on finances, time, and academic productivity (Drago & Williams, 2000; Evans & Grant, 2009). Additionally, as the potential childcare and monetary pressures placed on graduate student parents have both been highlighted as contributors to the high attrition reported within doctoral programs in Canada (Litalien & Guay, 2015), those individuals who choose to delay their family planning may increase their likelihood of finishing their degrees. Sadly, with doctoral dropout rates estimates remaining as high as 30-50% in North America since the early 1960s—particularly among women and those enrolled in social sciences, humanities, and fine arts disciplines—it would appear that many trainees have needed to face difficult personal and professional choices early in their academic careers (Berelson, 1960; Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Ferreira, 2003; Lott, Gardner & Powers, 2009; Lovitts, 2001; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Nettles & Millett, 2006; Sowell, 2009).

Waiting until one or both partners have found secure post-graduation employment can help to alleviate some of the financial stresses associated with a child—an important consideration given that doctoral and postdoctoral trainees have been reported to earn, on average, only \$20,000/year and \$45,000/year respectively (Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2013). Frequently however, trainees are left to decide whether it makes more sense to wait until after they have graduated to have children and risk issues with infertility (due to advanced age) or to become a parent earlier in their careers and risk negatively impacting their finances, research, and writing productivity. Despite all these complexities, I have persisted in my search for individuals who have cracked the formula for balancing both academic life and parenthood.

Indeed, my personal desires to more fully understand this issue are evident in one interaction from a few years ago:

Sitting across from one of my oldest friends and her husband in a crowded Cajun restaurant four summers ago, I knew what she was going to say before the words had even come out of her mouth. Her polite refusal of our plate of oysters had been the dead giveaway. “So, we’ve got some news...I’m pregnant” she divulged, a grin spreading across her face. I could feel the tears immediately well up in my eyes. I knew they had been trying to conceive for a while and a child was something she had wanted for as long as I had known her. She was also a junior PhD. student who had just completed her coursework, but had yet to tackle a very grueling comprehensive exam schedule. “How are things going to work with the baby and school?” I asked, cautiously. “Well”, she replied, “I’ve already thought about that and I think I can likely get both of my comprehensive exams finished just in time for the baby to arrive. Then, I’ll take two semesters off and get back to work”. A very lofty, and possibly insane goal I thought to myself, but I could do nothing but smile at the amazing news.

Eight months later, after a long day of teaching and commuting between Toronto and Waterloo, I found myself seated in her hospital room holding her tiny newborn son in my arms. My friend, who after months of prepping her home and life for her baby, had also managed to act as a teaching assistant and successfully complete all of her comprehensive exams. She had also accomplished these feats in the face an academic institution whose

administration had not been overly supportive of her desire to take a leave for childcare purposes. In that moment, clutching her sleeping baby, I thought that she—and likely a lot of other trainee couples—likely had much to teach me.

1.3 Study Purpose and Research Questions

The lessons that I have gleaned from this dear friend, along with the various other academic trainee parents I have encountered over the years of my graduate training have helped to formulate the purpose of my study. That is, what factors influence decision-making about becoming a first-time parent for women, men, and/or couples enrolled in academic training? Specifically, the research questions that were explored include:

1. How is a doctoral degree and/or postdoctoral position experienced by individuals and their intimate partners?
2. What attitudes, values, and contextual factors influence doctoral student and/or postdoctoral trainee decision-making about becoming a parent for the first time during this period of their lives?
 - 2a) How does this decision-making process occur for couples containing only one academic partner? For couples where both partners are academic trainees?
3. How do the lifestyles of doctoral students and/or postdoctoral trainees currently operate and how do they manage both work and life presently?
 - 3a) What leisure pursuits do doctoral students and postdoctoral trainees currently engage in?
 - 3b) How might couples perceive their lifestyle, leisure and work/life management process changing if they were to become first-time parents?

1.4 Significance of this Study

While the past several decades have produced a relatively steady stream of research related to motherhood in the academy from a female faculty perspective (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Evans & Grant, 2009; Huang, 2008; Kemkes-Grottenthaler, 2003; Kraiss, 2002), significantly less attention has been paid to the specific factors that influence when and why doctoral students (both female and male) have children—particularly in Canada. This is one

major issue I have sought to address through this research. Indeed, if the stress concerning how doctoral students might manage parenthood and training could be contributing to their high attrition rates from programs and institutions (Berelson, 1960; Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Ferreira, 2003; Golde, 2000; Litalien & Guay, 2015; Lott, Gardner & Powers, 2009; Lovitts, 2001; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Nettles & Millett, 2006; Sowell, 2009), it seems necessary for the academic community to delve into student thoughts and fears surrounding this work/life management process. Additionally, postdoctoral trainees have been all but ignored by the vast majority of the academic literature (Mitchell et al., 2013; Nerad & Cerny, 1999); thus, we know very little about their day-to-day experiences with their work and the ways their training might influence their future family planning. With greater numbers of doctoral graduates entering postdoctoral studies—many at an age when the average Canadian is contemplating having their first child—it seems prudent for academic researchers to ensure that they are exploring the experiences and lives of these trainees.

Men's perspectives have also been found to be missing from many conversations surrounding parenthood in the academy, and are largely invisible within the literature on graduate student parents (Crabb & Ekberg, 2015; Estes, 2011; Marotte, Reynolds & Savarese, 2011). This could be attributed to men's historically privileged status within academe and the potential for a male academic's partner to stay at home with children (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996). While progress towards greater gender equity related to the sharing of household duties has been slow, there is some evidence to suggest that a new generation of men may be more open to helping to shoulder family caretaking responsibilities (Chesley, 2011; Doucet, 2006; Wall & Arnold, 2007). As we hopefully move towards more equitable divisions of labour within households through a new generation of female and male academic trainees, it is vitally important that we delve into their decision-making experiences surrounding family planning and the factors that influence this process for both women and men.

This study also addressed the relationships that exist between academic trainees and their partners, a largely understudied area within the literature on higher education (Devonport & Lane, 2014; Yellig, 2011). As a research community, we know relatively little about the workings of trainee intimate relationships and even less about the impacts academic training might have on trainee partners—either directly or indirectly. The research that has been

conducted appears to suggest that academic intimate partners often play supportive roles in their family relationships (e.g. financially, though the completion of unpaid household chores and emotional care work), thus allowing trainees the ability to devote more time and attention to their studies (Jairam & Khal, 2012). Unfortunately, this type of support role can also require sacrifices on the part of trainee partners (e.g. relocating to a new community and/or country; trainees having less time to devote to their intimate relationships; reduced financial resources within a household; delays in the pursuit of parenthood) (Giordano, Davis & Licht, 2012; Yellig, 2011) that can potentially lead to stress and relationship discord. Consequently, this study has aimed to provide trainee partners with an avenue to express their perceptions about the ways their partners' academic training might be impacting their family planning.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two provides a comprehensive exploration of the existing literature related to the topics of gender, parenthood, academic training, and leisure. I begin with a discussion about how gender is shaped within North American society and summarize the gendered role expectations historically attached to men and women. Following this, I provide a basic overview of the associations between gender, power, and subjugation in our society, as well as the relationship between gender and work, both within and outside the home. After a brief discussion of traditional gender role divisions within the family, I delve into the factors that might impact why women, men and couples decide to become parents. Shifting gears, I provide some discussion about the realities of doctoral and postdoctoral training in Canada, probing into the ways that the demands of the academy can reach into various aspects of daily life. Following this, I merge the topics of parenthood and academic training to examine what might occur when children and the academy collide. This exploration includes specific gendered considerations, in addition to the potential benefits of combining parenthood and academic training. This literature review concludes with an examination of leisure and work/life management, as well as a summary of how each might be impacted by gender and/or one's status as an academic trainee.

2.1 Gender

Many contemporary gender scholars assert that gender is not a static concept, but a constantly changing category influenced by a variety of elements including time, place, culture, sexuality, employment, and one's position within the life course (Calasanti & King, 2005; Connell, 1992; 2009; 2014a; 2014b; Poggio, 2005; Russell, 2007). Connell and Pearse (2014) suggest that gender is "not as a predetermined state... [but is] a becoming, a condition actively under construction" for individuals (pp. 5). Such scholars also contend that gender serves as an organizational category that may aid in the management of the complex power relationships that exist within a given society (Connell, 2014a; 2014b; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). Once discussed as a purely binary concept (i.e. masculine and feminine), the notion of gender is now being increasingly viewed as a concept that can often confound discrete categories (Connell & Pearse, 2014; McPhail, 2004). No doubt aided

by the transgender movement of the 1990s (which has seen a resurgence in recent years with high profile individuals publicly announcing their desire to transition from male-to-female or female-to-male), greater recognition is now being afforded to the idea of a gender existing as a spectrum (Connell & Pearse, 2014).

While certain constructed boundaries about gender may be eroding, the historically entrenched expectations for a gender binary (i.e. men and women) arguably remain well entrenched in Western society (Butler, 2011; Rubin, 1975). Put into dichotomous terms, gender can be viewed as a venue for societal categorization through the promotion of behaviour expectations for men and women. Such expectations, which begin the moment our biological sex is known by others, are often nurtured in childhood through observation, imitation, and play (e.g. little girls play ‘house’ while little boys play ‘construction worker’ or ‘soldier’) and remain in place as individuals transition into adulthood, where social pressures can further reinforce performances of gender (Butler, 1988; Courtenay, 2009; Franklin, 2012; Lorber & Moore, 2007). Thus, it can be argued that gender “resides not within the person, but rather in social transactions defined as gendered” (Courtenay, 2009, p. 11). Each of these transactions, however, likely carry with them a different experience of power (Butler, 2011; Connell, 2005).

2.2 Masculinity, Power and Privilege

Back in the early 1980s, several Australian authors (Connell, 1982; 1983; Kessler, Ashenden, Connell & Dowsett, 1982) first proposed the societal construction of a dominant form of masculinity which men were expected to aspire and enact—hegemonic masculinity. Put in simplistic terms, hegemonic masculinity—one of many masculinities according to Connell (2005)—can be viewed as an alpha conception of ‘maleness’ that aims to oppress women and control other men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Existing as a stringent set of social and behavioural characteristics for men tied to domination (i.e. being powerful, in control, competitive, aggressive, risk-taking, independent, physically tall and strong, stoic, tough, virile, heterosexual, financially successful), hegemonic masculinity seeks to privilege those men able to exemplify its standards—in effect creating a masculine identity hierarchy (Cheng 1999; Frank, 1991; Gray, Fitch, Fergus, Mykhalovskiy & Church, 2002).

Consequently, those men who are unwilling or unable to meet its requirements (e.g. men who are more passive, dependent, experiencing a disability, emotional, sexually impotent, identify as gay, bisexual or trans) may find their masculine identities occupying a more marginalized status (Cheng, 1999; Connell, 2005; Coston & Kimmel, 2012; Pascoe, 2003). Interestingly, much like gender, a hegemonic conception of masculinity appears to be a largely fluid concept influenced by the idealized notions of maleness in a given place and time (Courtenay, 2009). Consequently, it can be subject to change. Additionally, demonstrations of hegemonic masculinity have been suggested to manifest within varying life spheres, including career (Connell, 2005; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005) family (Connell, 2005; Friedman, 2015) leisure, and sport choices (Blanco & Robinett, 2014; Connell, 2005; Wearing, 1998). Thus, men are frequently provided with multiple avenues for demonstrating their masculinity within society.

It has been men's historical domination of women, a concept often synonymous with notions of the patriarchy (defined as "a system of social structures and practices through which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women") that has been the focus of much of the work of feminist scholars and activists in contemporary history (Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1971; hooks, 2000; Walby, 1990, pp. 20; Wolf, 1991). Indeed, it was social outrage concerning the subjugation of women's lives, voices, and work—both paid and unpaid—that gave rise to the social and political movements associated with feminism. Ideologically, feminism can be thought of as a "critical project" aimed at exposing, disarming, and reshaping the often covert ways that patriarchal power structures have sought to disempower women—and marginalized men—within our society (Scholz, 2012, p 1).

2.3 Gendered Work Roles: Public and Private

While patriarchal power structures arguably exist in numerous aspects of our everyday social lives (Friedan, 1964; Greer, 1971, hooks, 2000; Walby, 1990), they have historically operated in complex and contentious ways within the context of work—both within and outside the home. Since the Industrial Revolution's separation of *home* (historically thought of as a private space where one does not receive monetary compensation) from *work* (historically thought of as a public space where one is paid monetarily), these two realms have functioned to reinforce social responsibilities drawn largely down gender lines (Belsky & Kelly, 1994;

Katz-Wise, Priess & Hyde, 2010; Rich, 1976; Sanchez & Thompson, 1997). ‘Traditional’ and/or ‘idealized’ notions of family (i.e. heterosexual, married couples with children) have also worked to reinforce responsibility expectations for women and men—each with differing degrees of social and monetary capital. (Hill-Collins, 1998). Men in heterosexual relationships, for instance, have historically been expected to serve as monetary providers for their wives and children—typically through paid work in the public sphere (Smith, 1987). Women, on the other hand, have historically been primarily charged with the unpaid duties concentrated within the more private sphere of the home, including tending to children and household chores (Marshall & Anderson, 1994). Apart from World War II, when a predominately female workforce was required to offset the loss of a male workforce stationed overseas, women have not historically participated in paid employment in the public sphere at the rates seen among men, particularly following marriage or the arrival of children (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Consequently, it has been argued that men have historically possessed greater financial and household decision-making power within their families than their female partners (Smith, 1987).

In the 1960s and 1970s, as greater numbers of women entered the paid workforce, many experienced feelings of increased economic emancipation within their families (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990). By earning a salary (albeit, often significantly less than their male counterparts) and gaining some financial independence from their intimate partners, numerous women experienced autonomy in ways that had perhaps been unrealized previously (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Such independence, however, often came with a steep price, as women were still socially expected to also tend to a ‘second job’ involving household labour (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Shaw & Henderson, 2005; Wearing, 1990). Indeed, it was this notion of a ‘first shift’ of paid employment for working women, followed by a ‘second shift’ of unpaid household labour that was first described in 1989 by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in her seminal book *The Second Shift*. Updated research has also suggested that many modern women may also work a ‘third shift’ of unpaid caregiving for children and/or other dependent family members (Bolton, 2000; Hochschild, 1997).

2.4 Gendered Parenting Roles²

While larger institutions (i.e. political, religious, economic) may help to shape gender role expectations for men and women at a societal level, gender remains something that is demonstrated and reinforced daily through social interactions—particularly following the arrival of a child (Belsky & Kelly, 1994; Courtenay, 2009; O’Reilly, 2012; Sanchez & Thompson, 1997). Specifically, gender scholars contend that the family roles of ‘mother’ and ‘father’ are largely shaped by the economic and social conditions of a given time, in addition to historically dominant gender role ideologies that have existed previously (Aboim, 2012; Coltrane & Adams, 2008; Doucet, 2006; Riggs, 1997; Russo, 1976; Thomson, 2011).

In many ways, it can be claimed that the caretaking role historically tied to women has helped to define their worth within society, and remains today heavily tied to a woman’s willingness to bear children (Jordan & Revenson, 1999; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000). From the perspective of many societies, a woman’s social status is intimately connected to her role as a mother (Cassidy, 2006; Jordan & Revenson, 1999) and her value as a person associated with her ability to conceive and bear a child (Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000). Because of this pronatalist social expectation, those women who cannot or choose not to assume this care provider role may face negative social judgment (Morell, 2000).

In contemporary society, women are continually bombarded by pronatalist messaging from the media, family, friends, peers, and clergy to prioritize the care of their families and homes above all other aspects of their lives (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; O’Reilly, 2010; 2012). Indeed, Wearing (1990) has suggested that a woman’s mere potential to give birth and nurse a child has made the role of mother appear to be a ‘natural’ responsibility for women, while Risman (2004) has maintained that society often presents motherhood as a woman’s moral duty. Such nurture-related expectations are likely tied to an ‘ethic of care’ that has been described in much of the feminist literature—one that implies that a ‘good’ woman should put the needs of others before her own (O’Reilly, 2010; 2012; Rich, 1976). Unfortunately, the engendering of this care role within our society has, arguably, left

² The content in sections 2.4., 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8 has been derived, in part, from the following article: Chesser, S. (2015). Intersection of family, work and leisure during academic training. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 18(3), 308-322. It is being used with the express permission of the publisher.

those completing such work taken for granted (Gilligan, 1982; O'Reilly, 2010; 2012; Rich, 1976) and has contributed to 'intensive mothering' expectations (i.e. constant physical and emotional availability for a child) being associated with women (Bosch, 2013; Hays, 1996).

Given the importance society frequently places on this care role, it is unsurprising to see women's competency as mothers under scrutiny. Indeed, women are measured against socially idealized mothering traits (i.e. patient, nurturing, self-sacrificing, devoted) every time they visit a playground, a pediatrician's office, or enter a friend or family member's home (Blackford, 2004; Mulcahy, Parry & Glover, 2010). Men, on the other hand, have historically been expected to put in long hours of paid work to successfully demonstrate their breadwinner capabilities (Glauber & Gozjolko, 2011; Townsend, 2002). In many ways, one could make the case that a man's perceived ability to live up to this societal hegemonic masculine ideal (i.e. being a 'real man') is intimately associated with his ability and willingness to be a good worker and earner for his family. As a result, unpaid emotional labour within the family has historically been considered too trivial for fathers to concern themselves with and thus, better suited to the role of 'mother' (Erickson, 2005; Hochschild, 1979).

2.5 The Gendered Nature of Family Planning

While the gendered nature of parenthood has been well documented in the literature (Doucet, 2001; Fox, 2009; Katz-Wise, Priess & Hyde, 2010; McMahon, 1995; Shaw, 2008; Walzer, 2010), gendered parenting roles are often assumed long before a child ever arrives. Indeed, decisions about whether to grow a family (e.g. via biological means, adoption, surrogacy, fostering, or step-parenting) can often slot future mothers and fathers into traditional gender roles—each heavily influenced by societal expectations and norms, as well as by each other. Indeed, Beaujot (2000) has asserted that perceived gendered attributes associated with the roles of 'mother' and 'father' may also be reinforced by the complementary or counter-role status that each provides the other within heterosexual couples. Consequently, while couples may often appear to make the decision to have a child together, it seems necessary to point out that women's and men's choices may be influenced by different factors that are frequently in flux (Heaton, Jacobson & Holland, 1999; Liefbroer, 2009).

2.5.1 Factors Affecting Women's Choices

Women have expressed being affected by a variety of factors with regard to their decision-making surrounding motherhood. Authors such as Parry (2005), and Dell and Erem (2004) have reported women expressing a desire to pass on their own genetic traits as one important motivator for pursuing biological motherhood. In particular, mothers have discussed the joy that can come along with the recognition that a child bears some resemblance to themselves (Rijken & Knijn, 2009), particularly when this type of observation is made by another person (Dell & Erem, 2004). Other women have expressed a desire to create a life that is an amalgamation of both their own and their partner's genetic material as an additional motivator for biological motherhood (Dem & Erem, 2004).

The significance of an intimate partner, in addition to one's marital status, have also been found to play an important role in women's reproductive decision-making. Women in heterosexual relationships have reported feeling strongly influenced by dominant cultural norms surrounding family and a traditional belief that individuals should be married prior to pursuing parenthood (Greil, 1991; Parry, 2005; Shaw, 2001). Consequently, heterosexual women who possess the desire to one day mother children may feel pressure to find and marry an intimate partner first (Parry, 2005). However, evidence suggests that this notion of family may be in transition, as statistics now show common-law, same-sex, and single parent families increasing in frequency across Canada and the United States (DeParle & Tavernise, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2015a).

While marriage may be the critical first step in some women's decision-making surrounding motherhood, it is certainly not the only influencing factor. Indeed, an urge to love and nurture a child appears extremely significant for many women—feelings that can often start as an 'itch' and evolve into a full-blown obsession (Bergum, 1997; Birch-Petersen et al., 2016; Orenstein, 2007). For numerous women, the desire to mother and shower their children with affection is something they have felt for some time and was socially encouraged though their play as children (Dell & Erem, 2004; Rijken & Knijn, 2009). Coltrane's (1998) social constructivist approach to gender argues that young boys and girls are socialized into gendered parenting roles from a young age, shaped largely by the highly gendered learning

environments in which they are placed. These environments, it can be contended, contribute to the development of differing skills, desires, temperaments, and wants from life. For instance, young girls—long before they are reproductively mature—have traditionally been encouraged to hone their nurturing skills in play centered on caretaking (i.e. pretending to be a ‘mother’ to dolls, pets or even younger siblings) and social proximity (Connell & Pearse, 2014; Formanek-Brunell, 1993; Franklin, 2012). From a societal perspective, little girls who took care of these ‘dependents’ as children, carefully feeding, changing, dressing, and loving their pretend children, will likely have the skills necessary to assume a real-world mother identity in the future (Francis, 2010; Kane, 2013). Therefore, it could be argued that little girls are taught to value and prioritize a caregiving role from a young age.

Other women have reported a desire for a child as a feeling that emerged slowly—often in conjunction with increased age and a ticking ‘biological clock’ (Birch-Petersen et al., 2016; Evans & Grant, 2009; Orenstein, 2007). This concept of women having a clock slowly counting down to their eventual reproductive demise is generally thought to have emerged in the 1970s, when the term was associated with middle class, white women who intentionally chose to delay having children to pursue careers (McKaughan, 1987). More recently, the biological clock has been described as a women’s sense of the interconnection between the social and physiological domains of her body, and has been suggested to underlie the question ‘how long can I reasonably wait to have a baby?’ (Friese, Becker & Nachtigall, 2006).

While the question of when to start a family in the life course remains important to some women, many others have expressed strong cultural expectations related to motherhood (i.e. pronatalism) as being some of the most influential factors in their decision-making (Bergum, 1997; Birch-Petersen et al., 2016). While the widespread use of contraception and access—at least for some—to legal abortions in Canada now provides many women with greater control over their reproductive capabilities (Black et al., 2015), those who are either unwilling or unable to become pregnant may find their choices judged by a pronatalist society (Turnbull, Graham & Taket, 2016; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000). Some of these sentiments could be argued to be tied to the traditional conceptualization of family often imposed on heterosexual couples—mainly, a belief that families should be composed of two married parents and at least one child (Parry, 2005; Shaw, 2001). As a result, women who cannot conceive or carry a

child to term may find themselves marginalized, as their bodies may be viewed as being ‘unsuitable’ for a growing fetus (Lahman, 2009). Women who actively choose not to have a child, perhaps because they are devoted to their careers or value and enjoy their life without children, may have their choices deemed ‘selfish’, ‘abnormal’ or ‘unnatural’ by those around them (Morell, 2000). In this regard, we can observe societal insinuations that a ‘mother’ role should be a woman’s top priority in life and that women should be willing to ‘sacrifice’—whether it be their careers, their bodies, or their leisure time—for children (Jordan & Revenson, 1999; Nuttbrock & Freudinger, 1991; Shaw, 2008).

It is also essential to point out that not all pregnancies are planned by women or couples. While specific statistics concerning unplanned pregnancy in Canada can be difficult to locate, recent research from the University of Ottawa (2015) indicates that as much as 40% of all reported pregnancies in this country may be unplanned. Of these pregnancies, approximately 50% are thought to be carried to term (University of Ottawa, 2015). Evidence also suggests that young, poor, non-white, and unmarried women appear to be the least able to plan their pregnancies based on their own desires and capabilities (Edin & Kefalas, 2011). Women’s reasons for continuing with unplanned pregnancies appear to be extremely varied and can include religious convictions, a belief that a child will help keep or reunite them with a partner, or a sense that keeping a child can “transform a whoops [situation] into something wonderful” (Booth, 2011, para. 4). In such cases, a child might be viewed as a potential catalyst for personal growth among women, allowing them to become stronger, more patient, more caring, and more flexible individuals (Dell & Erem, 2004).

2.5.2 Factors Affecting Men’s Choices

Unfortunately, the factors that influence men’s decision-making about parenthood have been far less studied in the literature (Jacobs, 1995; Walzer, 2010). While their choices have frequently been depicted as being more ambiguous than those of women (Peterson & Jenni, 2003), men’s decision-making appears no less impacted by gender. For example, one study found heterosexual men playing a small or insignificant role in the decision-making process surrounding having children, in that they made their desires known (i.e. desires regarding timing, numbers of children, or a wish not to have children), but often chose to defer to the

wishes of their female partners (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). Consequently, it could be argued that heterosexual men have traditionally possessed less power and privilege in many aspects of the family planning process (e.g. whether to have children, when to have children in the lifecycle) than their female partners. For some of these men, their apparent ambiguity about family planning has been suggested to be indicative of their inability to identify enough positive aspects of pregnancy and/or children (Peterson & Jenni, 2003). Other studies conducted on the topic of men and first-time fatherhood seem to suggest that one of the most prominent drivers for men wanting to become fathers involves their view of parenthood as a potential venue for personal growth (Kay, 2007; Marsiglio, Hutchinson & Cohan, 2000; 2001; Peterson & Jenni, 2003). Specifically, men have expressed a desire to work at imparting positive attributes to their children (e.g. courage, self-reliance, and discipline) as an important driver for fatherhood (Coltart & Henwood 2012; Finn & Henwood 2009,). Still others have suggested that by having children—in particular, male children who will potentially carry on a name to future generations—men are afforded the opportunity to leave a legacy behind once they pass away (Hirschman, 2016). Without a doubt, by becoming fathers, men are provided an opportunity to learn to accept change in their lives (Peterson & Jenni, 2003). They may also learn to embrace the notion that life will not always be within their control or that they have the ability to construct a new identity (i.e. father) they have never possessed before (Peterson & Jenni, 2003). Therefore, the role of parent could perhaps be viewed as a different avenue for men's—as well as women's—personal growth.

As mentioned previously, men have traditionally been expected to serve as financial providers for their families (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Feldman & Nash, 1984)—a role that can have its stakes raised considerably when a man becomes a father (Coltrane, 1996; Litton-Fox, Bruce & Combs-Orme, 2000). From a societal perspective, 'real men' and responsible fathers are expected to earn enough to provide for their families, regardless of the personal costs associated (Ambert, 2001; Bumpass, 1990; Randles, 2013). Thus, when a couple begins discussing the possibility of children, men have described feeling increased pressure to ensure that their income is as stable and lucrative as possible (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dermott, 2006). To achieve this, men who are in careers that are volatile may choose to look for more secure, better paying jobs while others may choose to spend longer hours at work in the hopes

of earning overtime pay. Both scenarios are likely to leave men with increased personal and professionally-related stress (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dermott, 2006).

Unfortunately, this apparent focus on men's role as 'breadwinners' in their families could impact their ability and/or personal desires to assume the role of primary caregiver for their children. Historically, men have been discouraged from pursuing a caregiving role—even if they possess an explicit desire to nurture their children and play an active role in their rearing (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001; Henwood & Procter, 2003). Indeed, such desires have traditionally been associated with the 'caretaker' role of females, rather than the powerful, in charge 'provider' role of males. Consequently, it could be debated that for men, 'father as provider' has socially been promoted as a man's most important parental function and 'father as caretaker' has been given a marginalized status (Doucet, 2009). Fortunately, this antiquated perspective appears to be ever so slowly changing (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Chesley, 2011). Several expectant fathers have reported experiencing increased social support—when compared to their predecessors—for their desires to be primary and/or involved caregivers (Dienhart 1998; Gatrell, 2006; Shaw, 2008). Additionally, the past several decades have seen greater numbers of men choosing to take pregnancy and birthing courses with their partners, as well greater numbers of men choosing to stay home and be the primary caregiver for their children (Doucet; 2006; 2009; Rochlen, Suizzo, McKelley & Scaringi, 2008). Indeed, research suggests that men are beginning to form definitions of fatherhood that expand outside the box of mere provider. As a result, it seems prudent for current studies of parenthood to perhaps focus greater attention on the diverse reasons why men might decide to become fathers.

2.5.3 Factors Affecting Couples' Choices

Regardless of gender, evidence indicates that both men and women who opt to become parents report being largely motivated by their desires to form close and special relationships with their children (Asselin, 2008; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dell & Erem, 2004; Lahman, 2009; Rijken & Knijn, 2009). Others have reported feeling as though the decision to become a parent signals a willingness to progress into the role of 'adult' by taking on the responsibility for another's life (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dell & Erem, 2004; Lynch, 2002). Still others

have reported feeling as though parenting children affords one the opportunity to ‘fix’ what may have been missing from one’s own childhood with one’s own children (Dell & Erem, 2004; Rijken & Knijn, 2009). While such desires may motivate the decisions of some, it remains important to acknowledge that couples may also be influenced by other internal and external factors regarding *when* they have their children.

2.5.3.1 Age Factors

From the perspective of North American society, there seems to be both a right and a wrong time to consider taking on the role of parenthood in the life course; however, men and women seem to experience these social expectations differently. For instance, Aggleton and Campbell (2000) have claimed that while both males and females possess the ability to create a biological child as soon as each has fully entered puberty, many North Americans likely agree that adolescents are typically not in a suitable position to understand and meet the responsibilities associated with parenthood (i.e. financial realities, sacrifices necessary to one’s social life, conflicts with childcare and education). In Canada, we have made these societal beliefs known via laws that limit the sexual activity of children under the age of 16 (e.g. age of consent for sexual activity with an older partner, requiring parental consent for minors to marry) and through the social stigma attached to teenage pregnancy, generally felt more acutely by young women (Aggleton & Campbell, 2000; Arai, 2009; Department of Justice, 2015). Though slightly less stigmatized, individuals choosing to take on a parental role in early adulthood (i.e. between the ages of 18-22) also appear to face social resistance. Young adults in this life stage are normally not thought to be fully emotionally mature and thus, still searching for appropriate identities (i.e. who they want to be, what they want to do with their lives) within society (Arai, 2009). Therefore, taking on a concurrent parent role during this time could prove problematic for some. This age bracket is also far more likely than other age groups to be undertaking some form of post-secondary education or beginning a career, thus, time and financial constraints can be seen as a barrier to appropriately providing for a child (Shaienks, Gluszynski & Bayard, 2007; Smit-Quosai, 2010).

Interestingly, as men and women begin to enter their late 20s and early 30s, societal pressure surrounding parenthood can begin to shift in the opposite direction, largely motivated

by the well-promoted notion that women's reproductive years are finite and must, therefore, be well utilized (Bute, Harter, Kirby, & Thompson, 2010; Hewlett, 2002). Women appear particularly susceptible to this pressure to not wait to start a biological family, as statistics suggest that women over the age of 35 face greater challenges to becoming pregnant and carrying a child to term (Bushnik & Garner, 2008; Hewlett, 2002). Additionally, women during this life stage are often considered by society to have obtained many of the prerequisites thought essential for parenthood, including being in a committed, stable relationship, finishing post-secondary education and/or beginning or being established in a long-term career path (Evans & Grant, 2009). While men may also feel pressure to start families, their reproductive viability deadline generally exceeds that of women (i.e. on average, men do not see their fertility rates declining until the age of 45 and have been shown to be capable of fathering children into their 50s, 60s and beyond), thus they are typically provided a larger time window in which to make decisions regarding children (Murkoff & Manzel, 2009). The argument can be made that this societal 'leniency' is tied to the notion that men's social worth is not as heavily tied to the role of 'father' as women's is to the role of 'mother'.

While most women understand that as they approach their mid-to-late thirties, their chances of facing fertility issues increase (Bute, Harter, Kirby, & Thompson, 2010; Hewlett, 2002), this has not stopped many from waiting to start trying to conceive a biological child. Statistics suggest that the current age of first pregnancy for women is 28.1 years in Canada, with first-time mothers over the age of 35 accounting for approximately 11% of births (Bushnik & Garner, 2008; Milan, 2011). Such statistics also suggest that women may be waiting until an older age before pursuing motherhood to provide greater time to achieve relationship and career stability (Bute, Harter, Kirby, & Thompson, 2010; Evans & Grant, 2009). Perhaps taking the lead from their female partners, men also appear to be waiting to have children. Indeed, recent statistics suggest that the average age of first-time fatherhood in Canada is 29.1 years, up from 27.8 years in 1995 (Beaupré, Dryburgh & Wendt, 2014).

Some have suggested that the rising age of first-time parenthood in North America could be indicative of a period of 'delayed adolescence' (i.e. a stage of development that typically involves a degree of self-centeredness and a reduced responsibility for others) among

today's youth (Côte, 2006). Côte has even given the transitional period between adolescence and adulthood a name—youthhood. Historically, youth have tackled many of the life events associated with 'adulthood' (i.e. securing a career, settling into a long-term relationship, buying a home, becoming a parent) in their late teenage years or early 20s (Jayson, 2004). However, this modern youthhood life stage has increasingly involved delaying these events to pursue undergraduate and/or postgraduate education—a new requirement for many careers in a more competitive workforce—or to engage in self-exploratory leisure activities (Jayson, 2004). While such pursuits are likely to impact desires and timelines surrounding family planning, other factors have also been suggested to influence couple's decision-making surrounding children.

2.5.3.2 Religious Factors

The concept of family has long been associated with the values espoused by numerous religious denominations (Adsera, 2006, Dell & Erem, 2004; Hayford & Morgan, 2008), therefore it is reasonable to assume that religious affiliation could influence family planning. Particularly within religions with a strong history of pronatalist teachings (e.g. Catholicism, conservative Protestantism, Mormonism), fertility has proven to be an important issue for couples and their families (Adsera, 2006). Such religions have traditionally promoted an expectation that married couples will produce biological children and, in some cases, commit to having larger families (Adsera, 2006; Lehrer, 2004). For example, the Mormon faith teaches that couples should aim to have as large of a family as possible, as they will be together in the afterlife (Lehrer, 2004). While religion is likely not the only factor that may influence fertility behaviours for couples, men and women who report weekly religious worship have also described wanting greater numbers of children than those couples who do not worship regularly (Adsera, 2006). Additionally, women who identify as 'religious' have been found to have their children at younger ages than women who are not religious (Hymowitz, Carroll, Bradford & Kaye, 2013).

2.5.3.3. Cultural Factors

Much like religion, culture has been argued to play an important role in family planning for couples (Riessman, 2000). Researchers from various regions of the world have

demonstrated the ways that a region's history, social values, and customs can influence institutions such as family and shape when and why individuals become parents (Alampay, 2014; Isaac, Annie & Prashanth, 2014; Zu, Zhang & Hee, 2014). For example, researchers Xu, Zhang and Hee (2014) have proposed that couples' behaviours surrounding parenthood in China are heavily shaped by laws and customs stressing a responsibility to the collective 'whole'—a value that is reflected in many of the country's other political and social structures. Alternatively, Indian couples have been argued to have had their family decision-making influenced by the region's values related to collectivism, strong kinship networks, and the importance of family (Isaac, Annie & Prashanth, 2014). Consequently, Indian couples may base their family planning around the desires of extended family, the need to solidify their marital union (e.g. children are sometimes seen as a way of establishing permanence in arranged marriages—a common tradition in India), or the belief that children will care for them in their old age (Riessman, 2000). Much like Indian societies, the extensively promoted pronatalist notion in Filipino culture that “family is the centre of [the] universe” likely also places tremendous pressure on couples—particularly when this idea is promoted by extended family and friends. When combined with the social belief that “achievements and failings reflect on the family as a whole”, it could be argued that the idea of 'choice' with regard to parenthood could be like an illusion for many Filipino couples. Finally, it should be noted that as individuals are shaped by the customs, values, and traditions of the cultures in which they are raised (Thompson, Hickey & Thompson, 2016), it is probable that couples who move to other regions of the world will still be influenced (to varying degrees) by these cultural elements when considering parenthood.

2.5.3.4 Social Influences

While decisions about family may be considered a private matter for individuals and couples, they can be influenced by a variety of social influences. Particularly for women, family planning can be heavily impacted by the expectations of one's family concerning the pursuit of motherhood (Bernardi, 2003; Dell & Erem, 2004). For instance, women have described feeling pressure to marry and have children by their parents, despite their own desires to pursue education or a career (Bernardi, 2003). For these women, not meeting family expectations surrounding if, when, or how to become a mother can lead to feelings of guilt,

embarrassment, or failure and may cause some women to make fertility choices reactively (e.g. having children earlier than they would like to appease family (Dell & Edem, 2004). Some women have gone as far as to describe making ‘deals’ with their families to ‘settle down’, find a partner, and have children only after they have finished their education (Bernardi, 2003). Siblings have also proven to be an influential family force in the fertility decisions of both men and women, particularly when one’s siblings are having children (Lyngstad & Prskawetz, 2010). In these cases, the children of siblings can serve as a reminder or family expectations regarding parenthood and can trigger feelings of inadequacy.

Additionally, friendship groups have proven to be a significant factor in men’s, women’s and couples’ decision-making concerning parenthood. Particularly when many members of one’s friend circle are already parents themselves, individuals can feel a sense of non-conformity if they are not also parents or pursuing parenthood (Balbo & Barban, 2014; Bernardi, 2003). One female participant in Bernardi’s research described this phenomenon as a “syndrome of encirclement-by-pregnancy”, implying that she felt like she would inevitably want a child because all of her friends were becoming parents. This sentiment has been described in other literature sources as a type of social contagion process surrounding fertility (Lois & Becker, 2014) and can lead to individuals to pursue parenthood to feel a sense of belonging and/or that they have lived up to social expectations.

2.5.3.5 Lifestyle Impacts of Children

In addition to religious, family and friend group pressures, the physical, social, and economic impacts of children also likely play a role in family planning within couples. Sleep, for example, is a basic human need essential for health and well-being that is commonly impacted by children (Nelson, Kushlev & Lyubomirsky, 2014). Specifically, research has found that the raising of young children can result in increased rates of sleep disturbance (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003), with parents of very young infants reporting the greatest decreases in their sleep duration during the night (Lee, Zaffke & McEnany, 2000; Yamazaki, Lee, Kennedy & Weiss, 2005). Additionally, evidence suggests that women may experience greater changes to their sleep patterns in the first months of their children’s lives when compared to their male counterparts (Yamazaki, Lee, Kennedy, Weiss, 2005). Unfortunately,

while sleep patterns may become more regular as children grow, there is evidence to support the idea that regular childcare can cause significant fatigue for parents (Nelson, Kushlev & Lyubomirsky, 2014). As a result, those individuals who are already extremely busy and/or extremely fatigued may choose to delay their pursuit of parenthood—or forgo the endeavour altogether.

Social relationships also do not appear impervious to change following the transition to parenthood and may also be factors in decision-making regarding family. Specifically, intimate partner relationships appear to be some of the most impacted by children (in particular, young children), with couples reporting decreased marital satisfaction, decreased time spent together, and increased conflict after becoming parents (Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb & Bradbury, 2008; Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2002; White, Booth, & Edwards, 1986). Opportunities to engage with friends, co-workers, and other forms of social support can also decrease following the arrival of children and can lead to feelings of social isolation, particularly for women and/or parents who stay at home (Latshaw, 2011; Parry, Glover & Mulcahy, 2013). While there is also research to support the idea that new parents may eventually find ways to socially engage with others through their shared experience of parenthood (Nelson, Kushlev & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003; Parry, Glover & Mulcahy, 2013); it is important to acknowledge this family planning consideration for couples.

Economically, children have also been found to have an impact on the lives of their parents, thus financial resources are likely a salient family planning factor for many couples. Prior to even being born or coming into the care of new parents, children require financial expenditures to properly prepare for their arrival (i.e. cribs, beds, car seats, strollers, clothing, diapers). Once a child is physically present in a home, mothers and/or fathers must also make decisions about their care—an often costly requirement that may factor into the timing of parenthood. Such care options may include one parent staying at home permanently with a child (and potentially quitting a paid position), one or both parents taking parental leave (the amount of time may vary based on country or province), a child being cared for by another family member or friend, a child being cared for by a nanny or babysitter, or a child being placed into a more formalized care setting such as a daycare. Unfortunately, such choices are

likely driven not only by the care desires of parents, but also by the financial resources available to couples.

For example, parents may plan to take the maximum amount of parental leave they are entitled to under the law—in Ontario, up to 37 weeks by either one or both parents (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2015); however, some may find that the reduced salary they receive while on leave is not enough to cover their household expenses (Dell & Erem, 2003). Thus, some parents may choose to return to work earlier than expected or find alternative, less expensive care options for their children. For dual earner families, it may make financial sense for a parent to quit their job and stay at home full time with their child(ren), suggesting that they find ways to compensate for their loss of this income (i.e. downsizing household expenses, working from home). These scenarios require not only that parents weigh household incomes against expenses (including child care), but also that they assess the lost wages and opportunity costs (i.e. money they could have been earning in the future) that may result from a parent staying at home with a child. While not all couples may run through these financial scenarios before becoming parents, they remain important tangential considerations in the overall family planning process.

2.6 Academic Training

Seemingly far from this world of parenthood lies the realm of academia. Indeed, the academic domain—whether it be at the level of student or professor—involves stepping away from the stereotypical ‘9 to 5’ workday and into an environment where ‘work’ never seems to end (American Association of University Professors, 2001; Anaya, Glaros, Scarborough & Tami, 2009; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). From the perspective of many departments, graduate students are “trained to be monkish in their devotion and slavish in their pursuit of knowledge” to properly prepare for a future in the academy (Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009, pp. 438). Unfortunately, the demanding nature of this academic role can leave those trainees who are not working 60-hour work weeks (a trait that could very well constitute a label of ‘workaholism’ in many other professions) deemed ‘uncompetitive’ by their institutions (Anaya, Glaros, Scarborough & Tami, 2009; Boje & Tyler, 2009; Gappa & MacDermid, 1997; Oates, 1971; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Indeed, the risks posed to the

health and well-being of those individuals who do choose to equate a workaholic lifestyle with academic training can be immense, and may include poor work-life management, physical and mental ‘burnout’ and, in extreme cases, increased rates of attrition (Golde, 2000; Maslach and Leiter, 2008; Wall, 2008).

2.6.1 Training Stage and Discipline Specific Expectations

While certain elements of academic training, at both the graduate or postdoctoral level, are relatively universal in North America (e.g. coursework, committee and supervisor meetings, publication writing, teaching, and grading responsibilities), other components remain significantly dependent upon the stage of one’s academic training. Indeed, productivity expectations and the levels of autonomy one is able to maintain will likely differ for doctoral students versus postdoctoral trainees. For instance, postdoctoral trainees would typically not be expected to complete coursework or committee meetings, but might have a higher teaching or manuscript writing commitment than a doctoral student (Chen, McAlpine & Amundsen, 2015; Su, 2013). However, for the purposes of my research, I have chosen to group these two trainee categories together, as each requires a significant academic commitment (i.e. years of training above the undergraduate level) that could potentially lead to challenges for the management of work and life.

In addition to the stage of training, the discipline in which a trainee works can impact the expectations they will need to fulfil academically. For instance, within the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), doctoral students are often viewed as ‘apprentices’ in the eyes of their academic supervisors (often termed principal investigators or PIs), as they frequently work on projects that are directly related to their supervisor’s research interests (Finn, 2005; Gardner, 2008; Peters, 1997). Additionally, grant funding for a PI’s laboratory often depends largely on a doctoral student’s productivity; consequently, students in STEM disciplines may experience less flexibility with regard to their working schedules (i.e. laboratory work cannot typically be conducted from home) and may feel a degree of pressure to put in long work hours to achieve publishable results (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). Additionally, doctoral students in the STEM disciplines often hold research assistantships (which increases their opportunity to publish academically) and

are generally expected to work collaboratively as a research laboratory to achieve publishable material—additional factors that can further decrease the flexibility of a trainee’s day-to-day schedule (Austin, 2002)

Conversely, doctoral and postdoctoral trainees in the humanities and social sciences often conduct research projects that are only loosely related to the research conducted by their supervisors (Finn, 2005; Gardner, 2008; Peters, 1997). As a consequence, these individuals may not experience the same degree of pressure as STEM students, as a supervisor’s future funding is often not directly tied to the research published by their students. Unlike their STEM counterparts, trainees in the social sciences and humanities also more commonly hold teaching assistantships, thus they are afforded slightly more autonomy with regard to their daily duties (Austin, 2002; Gardner, 2008). Several published narratives written by humanities and social science doctoral students have also discussed the flexibility that such disciplines afford regarding when and where trainees work (Asselin, 2008; Evans & Grant, 2009; Lynch, 2002). For instance, Gabriel Asselin (2008), a parent and doctoral student in anthropology, has expressed the ways that his student status allowed him greater freedom to structure his day around his partner’s working schedule. Specifically, he reported being able to independently structure when he takes his classes, works on his academic writing and completes his data collection, depending on when his wife has free time to care for their children. Interestingly, research into the gender distribution across academic disciplines has suggested that the work-related flexibility often afforded to humanities and social science scholars (in addition to other factors) may account for the reduced number of women entering STEM degrees in Canada (Hango, 2013).

2.6.2 Postdoctoral Training Expectations

Once a doctoral student has completed her or his PhD, many may decide to transition into a postdoctoral position, particularly if they come from a STEM or health science discipline (Mitchell et al., 2013; Su, 2013). In such fields, this postdoctoral period is often seen as a time in a junior scholar’s career for them to learn to become autonomous in their academic research (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2013; Nerad & Cerny, 1999). Postdoctoral trainees are also becoming increasingly popular in the humanities

and social sciences, areas which have historically permitted doctoral graduates to immediately transition into tenure-track positions (Mitchell et al., 2013). It could be speculated that this overall increase in postdoctoral trainee employment in these fields might be the result of the faculty hiring freezes put in place by college and universities following the global economic downturn in 2008.

Unfortunately, specific statistics and demographic information related to postdoctoral trainees can be difficult to obtain in Canada, as many universities do not keep detailed records of these individuals (Nerad & Cerney, 1999). However, the Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars (CAPS) in association with Mitacs (a Canadian not-for-profit training group) has attempted to obtain its own national survey data to help fill this information void. In their 2013 survey, which included information from 1830 respondents working at 130 universities across Canada and around the globe, CAPS found that the average age of a Canadian postdoctoral trainee to be 34 years (Mitchell et al., 2013). Additionally, approximately 35% of the postdoctoral trainees surveyed expected to spend three to five years in their postdoctoral position before transitioning into a permanent position—suggesting that they could be in their mid to late 30s by the time they obtain permanent employment. It should be noted that this age range coincides with the age suggested to pose increased risk to a woman’s ability to conceive and carry a biological child (Bushnik & Garner, 2008; Hewlett, 2002).

Of the CAPS respondents, 53% were female, 69% were married or in a committed intimate relationship, over 50% were landed immigrants, and approximately 35% had dependent children. While most of the postdoctoral respondents were found to come from the physical and life sciences (e.g. biology, chemistry, engineering, human sciences), approximately 13.5% reported working in a social science or humanities discipline. Additionally, funding for postdoctoral positions was reported to generally come either from a fellowship grant held by the individual trainee (i.e. through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council or the Canadian Institutes of Health Research) or from funding held by a mentor PI. Specifically, the average salary of a postdoctoral fellow responding to the CAPS survey was found to be

\$45,000 Canadian dollars—an arguably low salary given that the national average reported among all Canadians is \$49,000 (Statistics Canada, 2015b).

Finally, although working hours and expectations placed upon postdoctoral trainees by their supervisors were not investigated by the survey, other authors have reported a highly competitive work environment in which postdoctoral trainees may be expected to work up to 70 hours a week (Goh, 2008; Nelson, 2004). Undoubtedly, such pressure could have a significant effect on the personal lives—and choices—of these academic trainees (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013).

2.7 When Children and Advanced Educational Training Collide

Without a doubt, the decision to even consider starting a family is one that involves accepting that life will need to alter in some way. Indeed, major life transitions in all of our lives generally require not only that we be open to adapting to change, but also that we be willing to re-evaluate the roles we occupy for others (e.g. wife, husband, partner, daughter, son, student), as well as our own boundaries, priorities, and motivations (Mattessich & Hill, 1987; Sevón, 2012). For many couples, however, the decision-making process surrounding the possibility of parenthood can be a stressful one, as it is not always assured that intimate partners will agree on when or even whether to become parents (Rosina & Testa, 2009). The stress associated with such decisions can certainly be amplified if one, or both, parents are trainees.

2.7.1 Trainee Life and Parenthood

For those individuals who decide to become parents during their academic training, the realities of juggling the demands of both parent and student roles can be sobering. Indeed, student parents have reported increased levels of stress, likely attributable to the conflicting priorities associated with each role (Cohen, 2011; Demers, 2014; Desrochers, Hilton & Larwood, 2002; Duxbury, Higgins & Lee, 1994; Fowlkes, 1987; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Sorcinelli & Near, 1989). The reality for those not on parental leave is that a baby is not going to cease needing to be fed, changed and cuddled because one has a paper due in the morning. Conversely, academic institutions are likely going to continue to have the

expectation that trainees will attend meetings and meet deadlines, despite having a child at home. This conflict associated with managing dual roles for trainee parents does appear, however, to have a noticeable gender bias (Elliott, 2008).

Both male and female academics report work-family role conflict, in that each has described feeling that a parental role is often incongruent or incompatible with an academic role, primarily due to the time that each requires (Elliott, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu, 2011; O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Specifically, Elliott’s work found that female academics frequently report increased conflict related specifically to their parental/caregiver role, while male academics often report feeling greater strain associated with their work-related identities. This conflict appears to manifest either as feelings of inadequacy (e.g. “I am a poor parent who is not spending enough time playing with my child because I work too much” or “I am lagging behind as a graduate student because I am not working hard enough”) or as guilt (e.g. women expressing feeling guilty about taking time away from their families to work while men reported feeling guilty that they are not living up to their work expectations due to their responsibilities at home).

It has been proposed that commitment for trainee parents may also play a major role in the management of both their ‘trainee’ and ‘parent’ identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Within the context of identity, commitment is seen to involve how invested a person is in maintaining an identity because it holds meaning for them; thus, the greater the commitment to an identity, the more ingrained an identity is likely to become in an individual’s conception of self (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000). When applied to the potential dual management of parental and trainee identities, the concept of commitment can become exceedingly complicated. It has been proposed that if an individual is not committed to multiple identities equally, the potential for conflict and stress increases, presumably because an individual is not inherently motivated to find ways to effectively manage both roles concurrently (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). Thus, if a trainee is exceedingly committed to their parental role and only somewhat committed to their training role, it could be suggested that there is a likelihood that they will experience stress and may make changes to remedy this tension (e.g. they may choose to leave their professional positions). However, if an individual is seen to have equivalent commitment to

two or more identities, research has demonstrated that a decreased level of stress will often be experienced (O'Neill & Greenberger, 1994). Consequently, it could be proposed that trainee parents who are equally committed to (and satisfied with) their roles as 'parent' and 'academic' are more likely to experience less role-related stress.

Unfortunately, the roles of parent and academic are not necessarily afforded equal status in the eyes of society and the academy (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Solomon, 2011). From a societal perspective, parenthood is arguably a role that should supersede all others, as it is widely accepted that those individuals who have taken on the responsibility for a child have an obligation to make the needs of that child a priority in their lives (Baker, 2010). Pronatalist beliefs and traditional gender roles within the family also suggest that women are expected to shoulder a disproportionate amount of such care responsibilities, regardless of their work or educational status (Morrell, 2000; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000). Unfortunately, the views of the academy often sit in direct opposition to such beliefs, in that one's work is often required to take precedence over many aspects of one's life for an opportunity at long term academic success (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

2.7.2 Academic/Parent Gender Roles

Feminist scholars contend that the academy has historically been built on a traditionally male-oriented work model involving a highly demanding and sometimes inflexible work schedule (Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Erickson, 2012; Haake, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). In the past, those academics who also wanted to have a family typically needed to either have paid help or a spouse at home to take care of any household or childcare responsibilities (Coltrane, 2004; Knights & Richards, 2003). In this male-centred model, it was traditionally possible for established academics/academic trainees (historically, predominately male) to 'have it all' with regard to training and family because they often had a partner at home (historically, predominately female) to ensure that their focus remained primarily on their work (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). Indeed, several male graduate students have reported that this arrangement has worked well for their academic careers and families (Lynn, 2008; Marotte, Reynolds & Savarese, 2011). However, such a biased approach to family structure likely assumes that men will occupy and

prioritize their academic role over fatherhood and women will occupy and prioritize the role of mother over that of trainee (Anderson & Mieзитis, 1999; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008). This type of androcentric approach to paid/unpaid divisions of labour is arguably not conducive to modern graduate and postdoctoral trainees who are now composed of increasing numbers of women, as well as partnerships in which both individuals are academic trainees or where the male partner wishes to stay at home in a caregiving role (Bane, 2011; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2011). As one graduate student in a University of California study of parenthood in higher education put it “academia is stuck in the 1970s at best on the issue of [academic parenthood]” (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013, pp. 13).

Unfortunately, due to the decades-old contention that the bulk of the day-to-day responsibilities for children should fall on the shoulders of mothers (Hochschild 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Maume & Sebastian, 2012), women trainees may find themselves faced with increased questioning from both the academy and society regarding exactly where their priorities lie. From the perspective of some institutions, academic mothers may not be considered ‘ideal workers’ in that they may be assumed to be more committed to their families than their studies or careers (Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Such expectations may also be contributing factors to the increased stress female academics have reported with regard to the management of their professional and personal lives (O’Laughlin & Brischhoff, 2005).

Perhaps to counteract this perceived lack of commitment to an academic role, some women have chosen to put off having or adopting biological children until they have a ‘break’ in their schedules (e.g. attempting to time their pregnancies so they will give birth in the summer months when one’s teaching commitments are often reduced). Others may wait until after they have completed a research project or their degree to conceive, largely to minimise the impact a baby could have on their work or their perceived commitment to their studies (Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). Such practices can potentially result in couples having smaller families than they had initially planned for or no children at all (Kemkes-Grottenthaler, 2003; Kraus, 2002, Krakauer & Chen, 2003). Men also appear

susceptible to this perceived lack of commitment to work after becoming fathers, with studies suggesting that academic fathers are less likely to take parental leave (if it is available) than their female counterparts. For many, such decisions appear largely rooted in fears of career-related repercussions (Haas, Allard & Hwang, 2002; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009).

Without a doubt, decision-making regarding the potential management of both trainee and parental roles requires couples to contemplate how they might negotiate the extreme pressures each will inevitably place on their time (Lahman, 2009; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). Indeed, scholar Maria Lahman (2009) has described time as being the single largest contributor to her and her husband's family-planning: "time was what we lacked, not money, skill, or love—time" (pp. 272). For many academic women and their partners, who either simply do not want children or do not see a child fitting into a life they enjoy and are devoted to, the solution is simple—avoid having children (Huang, 2008). Indeed, some authors suggest that the majority of female academics will likely never have children, with statistics from multiple sources suggesting that over 50% of women at the level of tenured professor reporting having not had children in their lifetimes (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). However, the possibility remains that these women may eventually attempt to start families, having already obtained a secure future within the academy (Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). For couples who are uncertain about whether academic training may be an appropriate time for children, preliminary evidence suggests that, at least for women, decisions may be heavily influenced by the advice given by established female academics and by the attitudes of academic supervisors regarding family (Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Ülkü-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes & Kinlaw, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Indeed, having a supervisor who is supportive of parenthood or role models who can demonstrate that it is indeed possible to juggle both roles appear to offer some level of support for trainees pondering parenthood (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Sullivan, 2003).

2.7.3. The Potential Benefits of Juggling Both Roles

It is important to highlight that there is evidence to suggest that 'parent' and 'academic trainee' are roles that can successfully co-exist and that the time spent with one's children can

actually contribute to academic success. Within the literature, opinions about the potential impact of young children on research and academic productivity (most often measured in numbers of publications and particularly among mothers) have been varied and hotly debated. While a negative relationship between children and research productivity has historically been reported (Hargens, McCann & Reskin, 1978; Hunter & Leahey, 2010; Kyvik & Teigen, 1996; Long, 1990), likely due to the potential for children to be both distracting and time consuming for academic parents, other studies have found no correlation to exist between children and the time one is able to devote to research activities (Cole & Zuckerman, 1987; Fox, 2005; Sax, Hagedorn, Arredondo & Dicrisi, 2002; Stack, 2004; Zuckerman, 1987). It should be noted, however, that intersecting factors, such as one's career stage (i.e. pre or post tenure), the number of children one has, and the age of one's children can complicate the measurable impact family could have on research productivity (Fox, 2005; Hunter & Leahey, 2010; Kyvik, 1990; Stack, 2004). Still other studies have found academic mothers reporting increased focus and time management skills within the context of their research after becoming a parent, largely due to their need to more closely structure their scholarly activities around their children's schedules (Lynch, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Indeed, it is this flexibility in one's working schedule that can make academic training a more ideal place for parents than many other employment venues (Asselin, 2008; Eyre-White, 2009; Lynch, 2002).

Children have also been suggested to provide emotional benefits for parents, which can be applied in positive ways to an academic career, particularly for those in social science disciplines. Academic trainee parents, for example, have reported being better able to curb workaholic tendencies in their studies after becoming parents (i.e. children provide a reason to step away from work on a regular basis), thus allowing them to feel more recharged with regard to the execution of their work-related duties (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Asselin (2008) articulated that his and his partner's choice to become parents during their Master's degrees provided both with the opportunity to grow as individuals. Each described becoming more patient and better able to connect with other people—including research participants—following their entry into parenthood. Lynn (2008) too has reported that one's status as a parent can provide an opening for communication and trust with research participants. Such

studies suggest that the learned interpersonal skills attached to parental roles could strengthen parents' abilities to succeed within the competitive environment of the academy (Thomas, 2005).

2.8 Conceptions of Leisure

Separate from the work and family spheres that exist in the lives of individuals lies the realm of leisure. Though contested by much of the feminist leisure literature (Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson & Bialeschki, 2013; Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; Henderson & Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Henderson, 2005; Wearing, 1998), historical leisure scholars have conceptualized leisure as being inseparably linked to aspects of perceived freedom (i.e. from the constraints one might encounter through paid or unpaid work), and free time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Melamed, Meir & Samson, 1995; Neulinger, 1981; Parker, 1981; Samdahl, 1988). For example, Neulinger (1981) has defined leisure as “a state in which a person feels that what he/she is doing is done by choice and because one wants to do it” (pp. 15). For some, leisure may serve as a place to hone one's skills in an area, self-express, increase one's feelings of competence or, perhaps, self-actualize (Gould & Carson, 2008; Jones & Symon, 2001; Melamed, Meir & Samson, 1995; Trenberth, 2005; Whiting & Hannam, 2015). For others, leisure may be a way to cope or escape from the role constraints that they experience in other areas of their lives (e.g. their role as a mother, worker, or student) or to simply take time for oneself (Dillard & Bates, 2011; Iwasaki, 2001; Nimrod, Kleiber & Berdychevsky, 2012).

Though the leisure outlets individuals might choose for these purposes are seemingly endless, author Stebbins (1997; 2001a; 2001b) has identified two prominent, though often diametrically opposed leisure categories: casual leisure and serious leisure. Stebbins (1997) describes casual leisure as an “immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it” (pp. 18) that is undertaken primarily for the purposes of pleasure and enjoyment. Activities such as going for a stroll in the park, watching television, napping, drinking alcohol, reading a book, or socializing with friends are common North American examples of this type of leisure. Conversely, Stebbins (2001b) has defined serious leisure as “the steady pursuit of an amateur,

hobbyist, or career volunteer activity that captivates its participants with its complexity and many challenges” (pp. 54). He argues that unlike casual leisure, serious leisure outlets are more extensive in nature, occur over longer periods of time, and require a considerable commitment on the part of the individual to acquire knowledge, skill, and experience. Activities such as collecting stamps, rebuilding vintage cars, training for a marathon, playing bridge, or volunteering as a Scuba diving instructor are just some eclectic example of serious leisure pursuits individuals may choose to pursue. As casual and serious leisure often service different psychological, social, physical, and spiritual needs for individuals, they can both be argued to play an important role in human health and well-being (Shen & Yarnal, 2010).

Self-determination, or the belief that one’s actions are motivated by one’s free will and are not coerced (along with perceived freedom and choice) remain common components of lay conceptions of leisure today (Chang, 2012; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Ideally, it has been suggested that for individuals to experience perceived freedom through their leisure, (i.e. psychological, emotional, spiritual), their involvement in an activity must be intrinsically motivated purely by the enjoyment associated with the leisure pursuit (Poulsen, Ziviani, Johnson, & Cuskelly, 2008). Some scholars, however, have suggested that equating leisure to ‘free time’ may challenge individual perceptions about one’s right to, and the accessibility of, one’s unstructured time (Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson & Bialeschki, 2013).

This freedom associated with leisure has been suggested to potentially aid in the ability of individuals to deal with the stress (i.e. work stress, academic stress, time stress, traumatic events, depression) associated with various life events and responsibilities (Coleman 1993; Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993; Iwasaki, Mactavish & Mackay, 2005; Martinez, Ordu, Della Sala & McFarlane, 2013; Offstein, Larson, McNeill & Hasten, 2004; Oswalt & Riddock, 2007; Tsaur & Tang, 2012; Welle & Graf, 2011). In particular, leisure has been shown to play a pivotal role in the maintenance of our physical, psychological, social and spiritual health (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993; Heintzman & Mannell, 2003; Hutchinson & Nimrod, 2012). It can certainly be argued that for individuals who do not feel that they possess the ability to make autonomous decisions in many aspects of their lives, leisure may play an important role in helping them to achieve a sense of freedom. However, it remains important to remember that while leisure may be a place of perceived freedom and self-determination for some, it can

also reinforce social stereotypes and perpetuate forms of oppression, particularly when viewed from a gendered perspective (Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson & Bialeschki, 2013).

2.8.1 Gendered Leisure Considerations within Families

It has been suggested that whilst men and women may feel that they are making free choices about how and when they use their leisure time, evidence suggests that such decisions are “steeped in cultural ideologies about what types of behaviors are appropriate for women and men in society” (Henderson & Bialeschki, 2002, p. 259). Although freedom is not a gender specific notion, it would appear that different societal expectations for men and women affect the ways that each experience freedom and self-determination through their leisure (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996).

Leisure scholar Diane Samdahl (2013) stated that traditional North American society has placed constraints on what constitutes ‘appropriate’ leisure for men and women, while also imposing antiquated notions concerning when and how each gender should go about using their free time. For example, Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson & Bialeschki (2013) have discussed ways that women have historically been encouraged to take part in leisure that is less physically demanding and are, even today, often encouraged to engage in leisure activities that in some way benefits those around them (i.e. volunteerism, taking care of their families or communities). Alternatively, leisure scholar Lyons (2013) and gender researchers McKay, Messner and Sabo (2000) assert that men have often been encouraged to use their leisure time as a site for demonstrating hegemonic aspects of their masculinity (e.g. physically active, strong, aggressive, heterosexual), often through participation in sport or other activities that encourage ‘machoism’ (e.g. drinking, casual sex, violence against others).

Not all individuals, however, feel the need to bow to such social pressure in their leisure time. For some, leisure can be a sight for resistance against those individuals or social institutions who seek to constrain our free will (Shaw, 2006). Unfortunately for others, leisure time can exacerbate gendered societal expectations and feel anything but ‘free’ (Henderson & Shaw, 2006). While feminist leisure research has traditionally focused on the gendered nature of women’s leisure, some have called for greater amounts of research focused on the constraints that impede both women’s and men’s abilities to enjoy their free time and maintain

a healthier work/life balance (Johnson & Samdahl, 2005; Kivel & Johnson, 2009; Shaw & Henderson, 2005).

The historical societal expectations that promote the primary role of women in their families as ‘caretakers’ also imply that women’s leisure choices should factor in the needs of their families (Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; Shaw, 2008). For example, feminist leisure scholars have recently drawn research attention to the disproportionate amount of time that women appear to devote to unpaid household labour (when compared to men), which arguably may contribute to the decreased amount of time women have reported having available for leisure (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; Hilbrecht, 2013; Samdahl, 2013). Particularly for women with children, leisure has been reported to be a ‘luxury’ that they do not have time for or feel entitled to (Fullagar, 2009; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; Shaw & Henderson, 2005; Sullivan, 2013).

Mothers who do try to prioritize leisure in their lives may do so by finding ways to incorporate children into their own leisure time (e.g. running pushing a stroller, mom and child swim days at community centres), or may seek out specific family leisure time (i.e. family picnics, family game nights or family vacations) (Craig & Mullan, 2010; Shaw, 2008; Wearing, 1990). Unfortunately, such strategies can limit the sense of escape from the ‘job’ of motherhood that leisure provides and, specifically with regard to family leisure, may cause women to feel as though their ‘free time’ is yet another household chore to perform (Shaw, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001).

Feminist leisure scholars such as Shaw (2001) and Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger (1996) have asserted that societal pressure concerning familism may be one contributor to these sentiments. The notion of familism has been described in the literature by Edgell (2006), Hull (2006), and McKeown (2015) as an ‘idealised’ approach to family life that can directly or indirectly influence how women and men ‘do’ everyday family life (e.g. decisions about who takes care of children; who participates in paid employment; who has more time to engage with leisure either alone or with the family).

Though not necessarily to the same extent as women, evidence suggests that men are also likely to find their free time and ability to maintain a desired degree of balance between their work and personal lives constrained once they become parents. Societal pressure to take on a ‘financial provider’ role within the family can result in fathers feeling an increased need to work longer hours, take a second job, or commute further for better paying employment, therefore leaving less time for leisure pursuits (Ambert, 2001; Such, 2006). While it has been suggested that, on average, men are able to structure greater amounts of free time in their lives compared to women (Henderson & Shaw, 2006), men do appear to face some gendered constraints with regard to their leisure choices. Such constraints can be found to be heavily centred on societal pressure for men to conform to hegemonic masculine ideals (Shaw & Henderson, 2005).

2.8.2 Complexities of Academic Trainee Leisure

Much like gendered leisure considerations, academic trainee leisure is also multifaceted. Indeed, authors such as Jones and Symon (2001), Harris (2012), and Quinn (2007) have suggested that within higher education, the line between ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ can become exceedingly blurred, as academics can experience intense pleasure and excitement in relation to their particular area of study. For such individuals, this passion for their topic of interest can elevate the experience of learning in a postgraduate environment, taking it “out of the humdrum and into the meaningful” (Quinn, 2007, pp. 123).

Although demonstrating academic proficiency remains the dominant component of the doctoral and postdoctoral learning experience, the process of integrating into a larger university and/or departmental culture also requires that trainees be willing and able to interact with fellow trainees and faculty. While some of these interactions could take place in hallways or over semi-working breakfast or lunch meetings, many may take place in more informal, leisure settings outside of normal working hours, such as departmental holiday parties, gatherings at pubs, restaurants or homes (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011). Although these social opportunities may possess several characteristics of leisure (i.e. they are optional and are intended to be fun and relaxing), they could also be perceived by some as ‘work’, in that they are often important for honing one’s social skills and building networking contacts

(Ali & Kohun, 2007; Golde, 2000). Undoubtedly, developed social traits are promoted as essential elements for success in academia, as the ability to form connections with one's peers and superiors can often prove pivotal to the acquisition of scholarships and funding, as well as future research and academic positions (Henkel, 2005). As a result, 'voluntary' academic activities might seem mandatory (and, therefore, not leisurely) for students or postdoctoral trainees looking to get ahead in their careers, and may contribute to feelings of poor work/life management (Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko & Lu, 2011).

Unfortunately, making the time to connect socially with one's colleagues can prove extremely problematic for trainee parents. The often impromptu social outings that are common among students (and can carry over into future postdoctoral work) may be challenging for parents with extremely scheduled lives (e.g. daycare, children's activities, children's sleep schedules), sometimes leaving mothers and fathers feeling isolated from aspects of their academic roles (Anaya, Glaros, Scarborough & Tami, 2009; Gardner, 2008; Lind, 2008). Additionally, trainee parents who choose to partake in these work-related leisure opportunities may do so at the cost of some of their personal or family leisure time (e.g. time spent with one's partner and/or children, time spent in spiritual/religious-oriented forms of leisure).

2.9 Chapter Summary

This literature review brought together works from a variety of sources and disciplines to examine the seemingly incongruent concepts of parenthood, academic training, and leisure. It began with a discussion of gender that led into a brief examination of women's, men's, and couples' motivations for pursuing parenthood. Changing gears, this the chapter then outlined the specific experiences of doctoral and postdoctoral trainees in Canada and the expectations that can be attached to each of these academic roles. The topics of parenthood and the academy were then combined and an examination of related literature ensued. This involved a discussion of gender-specific expectations for academic trainee mothers and fathers, as well as a synopsis of the reported benefits of juggling parenthood and post-graduate training.

What is, unfortunately, currently missing from the majority of published academic literature is research that brings together the topics of parenthood and doctoral/postdoctoral

training and the implications these roles can have for individual and family leisure. While a few individual accounts of the experience of juggling these two roles have been presented in anthologies and short journal pieces, in depth explorations have, until extremely recently, been difficult to locate. Those accounts that do exist come almost exclusively from the perspective of female academic trainees at the doctoral level; consequently, men's, postdoctoral, and trainee partners' experiences have been rendered essentially invisible. Finally, given that greater numbers of students are entering advanced post-secondary training than ever before—many at an age when they may be considering starting a family—it seems prudent for the academy to turn its gaze to the personal needs and experiences of their trainees for the purposes of improving institutional supports and policies in Canada. My research seeks to address these identified gaps.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Positioning and Methodology

Chapter three describes the theoretical and methodological frameworks that I utilized in this dissertation work. To begin, I provide a brief description of the historical developments in academic inquiry that inspired the introduction of feminist ways of thinking about and accessing knowledge in academic research. Next, I introduce the reader to feminist research (including its modes of praxis), followed by a brief description of qualitative approaches to feminist inquiry. This leads to an exploration of feminist standpoint theory/thinking along with my rationale for using this approach in my doctoral work. This is followed by a reflection on the specific feminist thinking I bring to this project. Finally, I explore my specific methodology—narrative inquiry—and describe the ways researchers can apply a feminist approach to this investigative strategy.

3.1 Mainstream Research's Epistemological History

Historically, research conducted in the natural and medical sciences, as well as many social sciences (e.g. psychology and sociology), has been largely based on post-positivist modes of investigation (Reinharz, 1992; Schwandt, 2007). This epistemological stance, which is aimed primarily at proving or disproving hypotheses and theory, places importance on objectivity and the search for truth (Braidotti, 2003; Olesen, 2011). This approach to knowledge production has been largely praised and privileged by mainstream science, in part because it is assumed to increase an investigator's 'control' over their research (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Additionally, the traditional methodologies and methods utilized by post-positivistic forms of research often work towards the elimination of research bias through the distancing of the researcher from their "subject(s)" (Reinharz, 1992).

Braidotti (2003) contends that post-positivistic forms of inquiry which, even today, are prolific and heavily influential within the academy, have not been overly concerned with identifying the theoretical distinctions that exists between the knower (i.e. the investigator) and the known (i.e. participants or institutions being investigated; the topic of study). Indeed, post-positivistic investigations typically choose to remove any specific references to individual persons within the context of research (e.g. those participating in research may only be represented in statistical form). Despite its many praises, this form of inquiry has been

criticized by several social scientists utilizing critical forms of inquiry (e.g. feminist theory, critical race theory, queer theory) due to its lack of concern for the ways that social values, customs and differences may impact what knowledge we have, how this knowledge is obtained, and who this knowledge might benefit or oppress (Braidotti, 2003; Harding, 1987; Olesen, 2011; Reinharz, 1992).

Understanding the limitations of such a post-positivistic mainstream approach to social science research, I have chosen to have a feminist epistemological orientation guide this study. More specifically, this research uses feminist standpoint epistemology in its theoretical conceptualization of participant (women's and men's) knowledge and experience. In the sections below, I will more fully articulate the specifics of this theoretical and methodological framework.

3.2 Feminist Epistemologies Brought to Life

Feminist epistemologies strongly contend that the institutions that create knowledge (e.g. governmental, scientific, social, academic) have historically represented male interests by exploring the questions and generating the types of knowledge that would most benefit men (Braidotti, 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2012). Consequently, the natural sciences and many social sciences have been accused by feminist scholars of having a heavily androcentric—as well as white-centric, heterosexist, classist, and racist bias (Harding, 1986; Lloyd, 1984; Reinharz, 1992; Schwandt, 2007). For example, authors such as Waldby (1996) have discussed the ways women's bodies have been problematized within the HIV/AIDS literature (i.e. women's genitals have been accused of being more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections because they are physiologically more 'open' than those of men), while Lloyd (2005) has implied that aspects of women's sexuality have been largely overlooked by a medical community focused on assuring male sexual functioning and pleasure. Feminists have argued that such a strong focus on men has been detrimental to women (Braidotti, 2003), in that much of the research community has historically ignored the unique experiences of women's lives and the knowledge they create in their "every/everynight world" (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Schwandt, 2007; Smith, 1995, pp. 5)). In response to this exclusion of women's voices,

feminist epistemologies have sought to challenge mainstream knowledge that “excludes, while seeming to include” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, pp. 3).

Several feminist inquirers, however, have proposed that feminist research should not only focus attention on women and their experiences of subjugation and oppression within patriarchal structures of power, but also examine the ways that men influence—and may be impacted by—these structures. Gender scholar Julia Wood (1995), for example, has maintained that feminist modes of inquiry must seek to uncover systems of inequality that exist within our society and examine how they apply to both women’s and men’s experiences:

“Encompassing diverse, sometimes conflicting intellectual traditions, feminist enquiry is unified by the belief that females and males, femininity and masculinity are equally valuable. Feminist scholars seek to identify, critique and alter structures and practices that actively or passively hinder equality. Participating in a broadly based critique of received notions of knowledge and cultural life, feminist enquiry typically supplants grand theory with tentative, situated and interpretive analyses” (p. 104)

Judith Kegan Gardiner (2005) too has argued that feminist theory and masculinity are intimately connected to one another and have helped to shape one another: “misogyny created feminist theory, and feminist theory has helped create masculinity. That is, cultural condemnation leveled against women by religious writers, philosophers, and popular discourses across centuries and cultures produced rebuttals by women and men” (pp. 36). Thus, when applied to academic inquiry, feminist theory must maintain this focus on gender equity in its praxis.

3.2.1 Feminist Research Praxis

Hesse-Biber (2012) outlines that contemporary feminist research praxis typically adheres to the following four principles. First, *feminists ask new questions that often get at subjugated knowledge* (pp. 17). By asking new questions that target not only subjugation centered on gender, but also its intersections with race, class, sexuality, age, religion, and nationality, feminist research has sought to uncover women’s (and other groups’) knowledge and experiences of marginalization, subjugation, and oppression (Freysinger, Shaw, Henderson & Bialeschki, 2013; Dill, McLaughlin & Nieves, 2007). The ultimate goal of this diverse, boundary pushing focus is the upending of historic approaches to knowledge creation

and, potentially, the introduction of new, differently situated forms of knowledge based on diverse experiences. As a result, feminist modes of inquiry see subjugated groups as the ultimate ‘knowers’ of their own experiences, in that they are the ones who have lived them (Bunting & Campbell, 1994; Alcoff & Potter, 1993).

Second, *feminist praxis takes up issues of power, authority, ethics, and reflexivity* (Hesse-Biber, 2012, pp. 17). In this regard, feminist researchers are interested in unearthing, examining, and deconstructing the ways that power and privilege operate in all aspects of the investigative process—from the conceptualization of a research question, to the way data are collected, analyzed and represented (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012a; Watts, 2006). Furthermore, Hesse-Biber and Piatelli, (2012a) suggest that feminist researchers must pay particular attention to situational or personal factors that could impact the researcher/participant exchange and alter what is disclosed or understood.

The identity, social positioning, and moral integrity of a researcher are given explicit consideration in feminist research in the form of reflexivity. Pillow (2003) describes reflexivity as “an ongoing self-awareness [on the part of the researcher] during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research” (pp. 178). The use of reflexivity is thought to help a researcher uncover deeper motivations for conducting their work, the values and prejudices they bring to their interactions, as well as the similarities or differences that they may possess in relation to the participants with whom they study (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012b; Pillow, 2003). This reflexive practice also helps to instill a belief that feminist research offers a perspective from someone/where, as opposed to a “view from nowhere” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, pp. 17).

Third, *feminist researchers often work at the margins of their disciplines* (Hesse-Biber, 2012, pp. 18). By taking the road less traveled and actively defying many of the fundamental epistemological (and, by extension, methodological) approaches that have historically dominated mainstream scientific research, feminist researchers frequently commit to a marginalized status among many of their academic peers. Additionally, as they have not always been well accepted or rewarded as independents (e.g. with promotions, publications in high impact journals, or research grants and funding), feminist researchers often work

strategically and co-operatively with one another to ensure that their investigative ideology is recognized.

Fourth, *feminist research seeks social change and social transformation* (Hesse-Biber, 2012, pp. 18). Through their work, feminist researchers must sometimes work *with* and sometimes *on behalf of* subjugated groups. Often this process may involve helping participants to “name themselves, speak for themselves, and construct a better understanding of the structures and social forces that influence their experience (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012a, pp. 180). To achieve these goals for social change, researchers utilizing feminist methodologies are encouraged to make their research action-oriented, and strive, even in small ways, to work for change at both personal and social levels (Scholz, 2010). As a result, feminist research cannot help but be political in its work and possesses tremendous transformative potential for both participants and researchers (Denzin, 2000; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012b; Parry, 2003; 2014).

Watts (2006) might very well add one additional element to Hesse-Biber’s requirements for feminist research praxis—a belief that feminist researchers must practice an ethic of care in their research design and praxis. She argues that ethical feminist researchers must 1) guard against the exploitation of participants (i.e. do no harm, both to participants and themselves) and conduct their work in good faith, 2) practice moral integrity during data collection and representation and, 3) practice transparency with regard to research aims and the future uses of findings. In my years spent pursuing this dissertation work, I have taken all of these feminist research principles to heart and have worked to design and carry out a study that respects and supports participants, as well as feminist theory and feminist praxis.

3.2.2. Qualitative Feminist Research

While feminist research can take many forms in its approach to research (Olesen, 2011), qualitative research remains a popular mode of inquiry within this critical orientation. Authors Denzin and Lincoln (2011) offer the following definition of qualitative research:

“[Qualitative research] is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs,

recording, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves and interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (pp.3)

Feminist approaches to qualitative research, however, honour the elements laid out in this definition in diverse ways (Olesen, 2011). Primarily, feminist qualitative approaches work to make subjugated knowledge visible, while also pushing the boundaries of what can constitute knowledge, how it can be collected, and how it can be represented (Olesen, 2005; 2011). Additionally, feminist qualitative researchers have, to a large degree, shed the mainstream post-positivistic fixation on inquiry verifying or disproving theory and focuses more on ‘seeing’, ‘hearing’ and ‘representing’ the stories told in the research process by those with whom they work (Dickson-Swift, James, Kepper & Liamputtong, 2007; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992).

Context and social position have also proven to be important themes within feminist qualitative research. Within a research environment, feminist qualitative inquirers acknowledge the personal experience, values, and preconceptions that inquirers and participants bring to their interactions with one another (Olesen, 2011). Feminist qualitative investigators also recognize that researchers can occupy an ‘outsider’ and/or ‘insider’ role within participant groups and acknowledge that these roles can impact what participants may want to disclose in a research space (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Humphrey, 2007). Consequently, it can be reasoned that a researcher’s status as ‘woman’, ‘student’, ‘father’, or ‘feminist’ must be reflexively explored in academic feminist qualitative research. Throughout this dissertation, I have worked to acknowledge and explore these considerations through my analysis and writing.

3.3 Feminist Standpoint Theory

Undeniably, feminist theory and epistemologies have sought to access and make women’s and other subjugated knowledge visible (Braidotti, 2003; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1999; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Nevertheless, amongst feminist academics, great debate exists over exactly how knowledge is accessed and who can participate in its creation. Feminist scholar Virginia Olesen (2011) has proposed three main branches of feminist epistemology—

feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory, and post-modernism/post-structuralism). Within this dissertation work, I have chosen to take a feminist standpoint approach which I will explain in detail in this section.

Feminist standpoint researchers acknowledge the androcentric bias that has traditionally existed within the sciences (Harding, 2007); however, they also believe that we must go further than merely recognizing subjugated groups to ensure that all human knowledge is represented. Standpoint epistemologists such as Harding (1993; 1998; 2004; 2007) and Braidotti (2003) reject the notion that universal ‘truth’ exists in the world and instead choose to view knowledge as being socially situated (i.e. what we know depends largely on who we are, where we are, and the time period in which we live). These epistemologists see women and, oftentimes, other subjugated groups as a largely unexplored knowledge resource capable of viewing the world in less distorted ways—largely because they exist as an oppressed group within a society established by, and for, men and dominant forms of masculinity (Braidotti, 2003; Harding, 1993; Naples, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). Within this branch of feminist epistemology, the political struggle undertaken by subjugated individuals with and against a society that has historically ignored much of their knowledge is referred to as a standpoint (Crasnow, 2014; Harding, 2004; Pohlhaus, 2002).

Feminist standpoint theory has ties to neo-Marxist philosophy and the belief that knowledge within society must come from those at the ‘bottom’ (i.e. those who are marginalized, subjugated, or oppressed) as opposed to those at the ‘top’ (i.e. those who oppresses or exploit) to create social change (Barrett, 2014; Harding, 2007; Hartsock, 1983; McLaughlin, 2003). In his work, philosopher Karl Marx expressed his belief that the working class (proletariat) had a less skewed vision of society than their oppressor, the dominant bourgeois class (Marx, Engels, Moore & McLellan, 1992). Marx felt that that this bourgeois class was incapable of truly understanding the functioning of society, largely because it had constructed a system to suit its own needs (Barrett, 2014; Harding, 2007). Some feminist theorists have drawn parallels between Marx’s class struggle—with capitalism serving as the supreme oppressor—and contemporary gender inequities within society, perpetuated primarily by the patriarchy (Barrett, 2014; Harding, 2007; Hartsock, 1983). For example, standpoint theorists have likened men to Marx’s dominant ruling class (i.e. the ‘bosses’ within society

that dictate knowledge, theory, and societal values through social institutions), while women have been compared to the exploited ‘working class’ (Harding, 1987).

Unlike feminist empiricism, which tends to ignore the differences that exist between women and seeks to voice a composite experience of female oppression, a feminist standpoint epistemological approach disregards such universalized notions of women’s knowledge (Olesen, 2011). Indeed, standpoint theorists believe that as a society we can benefit from new ways of thinking situated largely within the everyday lives of women and other subjugated groups (Braidotti, 2003; Schwandt, 2007; Smith, 1987). Sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987) has argued that academic methods of investigation from male perspectives have rendered women’s perspectives largely invisible; consequently, it remains vital for women’s voices and knowledge to be expressed separately from those of men’s, as women may offer a fresh view of reality that challenges traditional ways of knowing. Feminist philosopher Sandra Harding (1986; 1987) suggests that although women/subjugated groups can offer a less partial view of society, not all women/subjugated groups are granted a feminist standpoint based purely on biology or identification—a concept sometimes referred to as epistemic privilege (Crasnow, 2014). Both Harding and Crasnow assert that women/subjugated groups hoping to challenge the status quo must also be willing to look critically, using an intersectional lens, at the ways their position within society (and, in turn, what they know) is affected by societal expectations, values, and customs.

Harding (1993; 2011) also puts forth an important consideration concerning the ways feminist standpoint theory can influence methodological considerations—for example, notions of objectivity within research. She proposes that while feminist standpoint research does not advocate for the type of research control central to post-positivistic ways of knowing (mainly, the belief that separation between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ will help to increase an investigator’s objectivity), it retains what she refers to as ‘strong objectivity’. Specifically, Harding (2007) argues that it is impossible for objectivity to be completely maintained within the context of research, as all inquiry is infused with societal values about what constitutes ‘productive’ and ‘good’ research. Furthermore, Harding’s notion of strong objectivity captures this idea that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower and, therefore, also cannot be disconnected from the society in which the knower resides. She stresses that, to avoid

confusion with mainstream definitions of objectivity, strong objectivity might be better understood as a type of ‘strong reflexivity’ (Harding, 1993).

Additionally, several feminist standpoint epistemologists have articulated the idea that within the collective label of ‘subjugated’ exist multiple sub-groups that might be better situated to ‘know’ the world with a clearer set of eyes (Hartsock, 2009; Hill-Collins, 2009; hooks, 1994; Narayan, 2009). For instance, African American feminist and sociologist Patricia Hill-Collins (2009) has described a ‘matrix of domination’ that exists for non-white women involving multiple, intersecting sources of oppression (e.g. heterosexism, classism). Hill-Collins advocates that those women who have struggled not only against the patriarchy, but also against white supremacy, are able to ‘see’ much of the oppression that may be invisible to other groups. Additionally, it could be argued that while men must struggle to see and understand sexism, white and/or heterosexual women must also struggle to see and understand racism and/or homophobia (Hill-Collins, 2009; hooks, 1994).

South Asian scholar Uma Narayan (2009) has also argued mainstream feminist standpoint theory approaches tend to be ethnocentric (i.e. they fail to understand that cultural implications of feminism in the West may not be universal). She puts forth the idea that individuals living in countries with a history of colonialization may not necessarily be in favour of mainstream Western feminist ideals about what is ‘progressive’ and/or ‘good’ for society (Narayan, 2009). According to Narayan, this resistance to Western ‘progress’ can include the rejection of ideas related to feminism. Consequently, for many non-Western feminists, a desire to recognize and challenge sexism may be pitted against a desire to combat the colonial powers historically enforced upon their communities by the West. From the vantage point of Narayan, it remains vital for feminist standpoint research to recognize and make room for viewpoints that come from the perspective of non-Westerners.

Interestingly, Narayan’s criticisms relate to one of the major criticisms of feminist standpoint theory—essentialism. Indeed, several standpoint critics have expressed a belief that it’s approach has been far too generalizing in the past with regard to subjugation and may have contributed to the perceived creation of one universal subjugated experience (Flax, 1990; Hekman, 1997; West & Turner, 2004). Contemporary approaches to feminist standpoint

epistemology, fortunately, have worked to remedy these issues of essentialism by delving deeper into the social positioning of individuals/groups and the intersectionality that can create plurality with regard to standpoints (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006; Hill-Collins, 2009; Harding, 1991; 2007).

Other critics have accused feminist standpoint theory's epistemological assertion that knowledge is socially situated as sitting in opposition to its claims that subjugated knowledge offers a clearer and less obscured version of reality—an issue sometimes referred to as epistemic relativism (Antony, 1993; Kukla, 2006; Rolin, 2006). Beliefs about epistemic relativism rest in the idea that it is illogical to believe that certain vantage points within society are somehow 'better', when there is really no way of being 'standpoint-neutral' with regard to our positioning in the world (Antony, 1993; Harding, 2004; Rolin, 2006). It has been insinuated that if this tension cannot be dealt with effectively, standpoint theory may find itself reduced to an epistemology of "multiple and incompatible knowledge positions" (Longino, 1993, pp. 107).

One final component of feminist standpoint theory which has been argued to be essential to its existence is the idea of 'achievement' (Crasnow, 2014). This particular idea relates to "the process of coming to have a group consciousness that is political" (Crasnow, 2014, pp. 149) and helps to differentiate a 'standpoint' from a 'perspective' when associated with a particular social location. This process, however, is encouraged to include diversity (with regard to its individual members) and avoid the fragmentation which might make feminist solidarity impossible (Crasnow, 2014). Further, Crasnow argues that:

"the political process of understanding how shared interests are forged should be part of a complete account of feminist standpoint theory, since political communities are built on shared interests and forged through finding ways to adjudicate among interests when they are not shared" (pp. 159).

Having described the various elements that contribute to feminist standpoint epistemology, I will now outline the specific feminist standpoint approach that I employed in this work.

3.3.1 Feminist Standpoint Approach to this Work

Given that my study involved an examination of issues related to parenthood and the systems of power—whether they be institutional or cultural—that can impact or oppress individuals' decision-making, I have chosen to have feminist standpoint theory guide this research. This particular epistemological approach provided the opportunity for me, as a white, middle-class female researcher, to capture and explore experiences surrounding the topic of parenthood from multiple standpoints of subjugation (Harding, 2007). Overall, I was driven to use a feminist standpoint theory approach for two primary reasons. First, I was drawn to the ways that feminist standpoint approaches require investigators be self-reflexive and critically examine the ways that their social positioning can affect the knowledge they access and create (Harding, 1993). In my eyes, my social position as a member of the group under study necessitated this type of reflexivity. Second, I was drawn to the idea that feminist standpoint epistemology borrows much from neo-Marxist analyses of labour division within society. As my study involves an exploration of employment choices (via academic training) and work/life management for both women and men in an academically subjugated group (i.e. doctoral students and post-doctoral trainees), this theoretical selection seemed to be an appropriate fit for this work.

To be clear, I wholeheartedly acknowledge the privilege afforded to those who have the opportunity to pursue post-graduate education. Without a doubt, academic trainees, in relation to many of the other social positions one could occupy within society (e.g. economically disadvantaged, chronically under/unemployed, lacking literacy skills of communicative abilities), are frequently afforded a large degree of power and social privilege. However, I assert that it is also important to acknowledge that doctoral and postdoctoral trainees work and study within an academic hierarchy that largely treats them as marginalized or subjugated groups—when compared to research associates, assistant professors, associate professors, full professors, and upper academic administrators. Additionally, many academic parents or those expressing a desire for children have also been found to experience a marginalized status in the eyes of the academy, mainly because children are often thought to disrupt one's commitment to academic work (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013).

This idea of individuals simultaneously possessing both a privileged and subjugated/marginalized standpoint depending on the context under consideration has been described in the literature previously (Zinn & Dill, 1996), and has resulted in a call for the standpoints of men and women—as well as other intersecting aspects of identity—to be situated within multiple systems of domination. Consequently, I have paid special attention in this project to the advantaged *and* disadvantaged positions that each of the participants might occupy.

It is also essential to interrogate the fact that this project was conducted by a female researcher and utilized the standpoints of both female and male participants. To date, I have not been able to locate any previous studies conducted by a woman that have examined men's marginalized or subjugated experiences using a feminist standpoint epistemological approach. Therefore, I believe that this particular approach offers something novel—albeit controversial—to theoretical considerations of feminist qualitative research. This desire to blaze a new path with regard to feminist standpoint theory is inspired by the following recommendation by Wylie (2012): “if the goal of feminist research is to address questions that are relevant for understanding and ultimately changing gendered systems of oppression, it does not follow that women must always be the primary subject of feminist inquiry” (pp. 549).

Additionally, I would reaffirm the belief promoted by many standpoint theorists that we, as a society, can benefit from new ways of thinking situated largely within the everyday lives of women and other subjugated groups (Braidotti, 2003; Schwandt, 2007; Smith, 1987). Indeed, subjugated knowledge can come from any source that is not the dominant voice within a given group or society—an idea expressed previously by Harding (2012): “standpoint [epistemology] legitim[izes] the distinctive questions, perspectives, and even moral and political demands arising from each and every group treated inequitably” (pp. 58). In the case of my study, I contend that male doctoral students and/or postdoctoral trainees interested in pursuing parenthood (in addition to their female counterparts) are both groups who have the potential to be treated inequitably by an establishment that sees ‘involved’ parenthood as being incompatible with academic success. In this particular context, I assert that such men may occupy a simultaneous positioning as both a privileged and marginalized group (Zinn & Dill, 1996).

Finally, in laying out my research approach, I would like to acknowledge some of the criticisms levelled against feminist standpoint theory and outline how they will be addressed in my research. Specifically, I agree with the critics who suggest that the practice of essentialism with regard to a standpoint group (i.e. the assumption that individual experiences of subjugation are all the same within a group) can obscure the diversity that exists within it (Flax, 1990; Hekman, 1997; O’Leary, 1997; West & Turner, 2004). To combat this universalizing of experience and perspective, I have opted to include two differing vantage points in this project—those of women and men. I freely acknowledge that men and women will, no doubt, present differing knowledge about privilege, marginalization, subjugation, and oppression—based largely on social location and the topic under consideration. However, the inclusion of both in the telling of stories about academic family planning can help to embrace the diversity of knowledge and experience that may exist. Indeed, Hirschmarm (1998) has argued that feminist standpoint approaches allow for the presentation of multiple standpoints on a topic (with potentially differing social locations with regard to domination,) while also recognizing difference and diversity.

Conversely, I believe that the diversity that is represented in my study’s participant standpoints (with regard to gender, age, race, nationality, and religion) can also help to resolve some of the issues associated with the epistemic relativism raised by authors such as Antony (1993), Kukla (2006), and Rolin (2006). In this dissertation work, I have not sought to position any standpoint as being more or less able to view participant experiences through the lens of subjugation, but have instead embraced what has been called a ‘balanced partiality’ perspective (Intemann, 2010). Thus, I would argue that by embracing difference amongst the participants, I am increasing the likelihood that, as a group, they will be able to scrutinize dominant assumptions through their collective (but individually experienced) standpoints as a potentially subjugated group (Intemann, 2010).

3.4 My Feminist Approach to Research

Very early in the conception process of this project and after some very thoughtful self-reflection, I decided to use a feminist research approach shaped by my own experiences and beliefs. To me, feminism remains a distinctly individualized concept that is experienced and

lived differently by all of the women (and men) who identify and work in line with its principles. Indeed, Hesse-Biber (2012) emphasizes that feminist praxis leaves room for a multitude of approaches to feminist inquiry and remains heavily influenced by the researcher, those being researched, and the interaction that exists between them.

As a female researcher who has spent much of the past decade researching the gendered lives of men (i.e. older men's experiences with aging and the body, young men's sexual health experiences, men's experiences with injury and return-to-work), my approach to feminism is very much in keeping with Wood's (1995) description: "feminist inquiry is unified by the belief that females and males, femininity and masculinity are equally valuable" (pp. 102). I see feminism as involving the recognition that women's lives function differently, and are shaped by different societal pressures than those of men. I also view the patriarchy as a harmful mode of social organization that *subjugates* and *oppresses* women, but also *marginalizes* men who are unable to meet its hegemonic masculine standards. My verb selection in this regard is carefully considered to convey my belief that men (even those who are marginalized) have historically received varying degrees of patriarchal privilege.

Through my work as a researcher utilizing feminist theory, I aim to disrupt the androcentric bias with regard to knowledge production (i.e. the search for an objective truth; a belief that a researcher must remain separate from those they research). Consequently, I believe that my work should seek to ask questions that access subjugated knowledge, which I believe has the potential to come from both women and men (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Wylie, 2012; Zinn & Dill, 1996). With regard to my feminist praxis, I take an ethic of care approach to all aspects of my research (Watts, 2006). This includes a desire on my part to practice transparency and moral integrity with my participants at ALL points of research contact. Within my exchanges with participants—and I should say that I view encounters with participants as opportunities for a two-way exchange of information—I also seek to practice reciprocity with regard to disclosures to demonstrate a willingness to also be vulnerable in the research process (Pillow, 2003; Watts, 2006; Wasserfall, 1997). This act extends to my reflexive writings for this research (which include three short vignettes in this dissertation), as well as a critical personal narrative examining my experiences as a female academic trainee with a desire for children (Chesser, 2015).

3.5 Narrative Inquiry

Having discussed the feminist epistemological approach that underpins this research, I will now turn my attention to my chosen methodology—narrative inquiry. Clandinin (2013) has described narrative inquiry as “a way of studying people’s stories, nothing more and nothing less” (pp. 38). Undeniably, stories are prolific in our society. Whether we are chatting about our weekend road trip around a water cooler at work, reading an autobiographical account of an infamous life, watching a true crime documentary on television, or journaling about our everyday actions, we are recounting the stories of lives and events. The power of such stories—often termed ‘narratives’—and their ability to aid in the understanding of experience has made them an irresistible target of inquiry for researchers in the past several decades (Bamberg, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Klein & Boals, 2010; Polkinghorne, 1988), particularly within the field of leisure studies (Glover, 2003a; 2003b; 2004; 2007; Griffin, 2015; Havitz, 2007; McKeown, 2015; Mulcahy, 2012).

As a form of exploration, narrative inquiry seeks to make meaning from individual stories of experience, whether this be through an exploration of actions and consequences, or an analysis of how people make sense of the world around them (Chase, 2012; Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Josselson, 2011). Lived experiences and the stories that they are capable of creating do not, however, occur within a vacuum. Indeed, “each story told and lived is situated and understood within larger cultural, social and institutional narratives (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, pp. 542). As a result, those individuals researching narratives must recognize and attend to this situatedness of stories in their inquiry.

The process of inquiring into narratives also requires that researchers acknowledge the role that relationships can play in the creation of narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Caine, 2008). These relationships include the connections involved with a participant’s lived experience, either directly (e.g. the individuals or communities who may feature in or influence an experience) or more indirectly (e.g. the institutions, culture, time period that help to shape experience or the telling of stories about experience), as well as the relationship between a participant and a researcher (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). As a

consequence, narrative inquirers must delve into these relationships—including their role in and impact on the creation of participants’ stories—in their research investigations.

One method of attending to these relationships within a narrative inquiry is by simultaneously tending to multiple components of lived experience. Clandinin (2013), for instance, has identified three particular spheres (she terms them ‘common places’ of experience) that she describes as being particularly important for narrative inquirers to address in their telling of stories. The first is the temporal commonplace, the sphere dealing with the past, present, and future of the person, experience, or event under study. The second is the sociality commonplace, the sphere examining the conditions (e.g. culture, society, institutions, family) that influence individuals, experiences, or events. The final sphere is the place commonplace, which acknowledges that “all events take place someplace” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; pp. 481). A successful narrative inquiry, in the eyes of Clandinin (2013), will situate the person, experience, or event under study within the context of these three common places.

While some of the events in our lives involve a discrete experience (e.g. a woman’s experience of giving birth to her first child), many others are continually unfolding (e.g. a woman’s experience of being a mother). As researchers, we are often encountering participants “in the midst of their lives” (Clandinin, 2013, pp. 43), an idea that can play out in the telling of stories. Indeed, when individuals share their stories of lived experience with others, they may do so in a non-linear fashion with regard to time (i.e. they may structure events out of chronological order). The telling of stories in this way can make the writing of a narrative plot, with a distinct ‘beginning’, ‘middle’, and ‘end’, a challenge for researchers whose aim is the telling of a coherent story (Denzin, 2000).

This privileging of narrative coherence (i.e. emphasis on a story making sense) over the telling of stories in ways that honour participants’ experiences has been one criticism leveled against researchers undertaking narrative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2010). To help resolve this issue, researchers undertaking narrative inquiry have, firstly, been encouraged to identify the important elements of personal experiences that must be attended to within their written accounts of participant narratives (Clandinin, 2013). Secondly, narrative inquirers have also

been encouraged to include participants, to the degree that participants feel comfortable, in the construction of their narratives (Clandinin & Caine, 2008).

3.5.1 Feminist Approaches to Narrative Inquiry

While feminist standpoint theory is well aligned with the goals of narrative inquiry (i.e. the telling of women's and other subjugated stories), some considerations must be included for the methodology to be considered distinctly 'feminist' in its approach. Although attention to issues surrounding ethics and reflexivity are frequent in most forms of narrative inquiry, these areas are of particular concern to feminist narrative inquirers (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). In keeping with feminist research's focus on issues of power and authority (Hesse-Biber, 2012), feminist approaches to narrative inquiry necessitate that investigators work to create a research environment that respects individual agency and empowers participants (Sosulski, Buchana & Donnell, 2010). One strategy to achieve these tasks involves the interviewer "following [participants] down their own trails" of experience in the interview process, rather than rigidly dictating the path that an interview will take (Riessman, 2008, pp. 24). Such a strategy not only respects participants as the primary authority on their own stories and experiences (Parry, 2014; Sosulski, Buchana & Donnell, 2010), but also allows individuals the power to speak the stories they want (and feel ready) to tell. Additionally, feminist narrative inquirers often engage in a reflexive exploration of their own stories and experience in relation to their research prior to interacting with participants, to understand what they will bring to the relationships with their participants (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Through my approach to this project and the research participants, I have made a concerted effort to honour these feminist narrative traditions of attending to power, authority, and reflexivity (Hesse-Biber, 2012), which I describe in greater detail in chapter four of this dissertation.

Feminist approaches to narrative inquiry also acknowledge that stories are experienced and told in inherently gendered ways (Hilfinger-Messias & DeJoseph, 2004). Given the androcentric bias that has historically been argued to exist within academic inquiry, the task of identifying 'women's' stories' has often proven difficult for many research participants and narrative inquirers (Hilfinger-Messias & DeJoseph, 2004; Lawless, 1993; Peters, Jackson &

Rudge, 2007). It can be debated that we, as an academic community, have not traditionally been well attuned to the telling of many women's stories (Hilfinger-Messias & DeJoseph, 2004; Lawless, 1993). For example, in her 1993 study of the storied experiences of female clergy members, Lawless reports one participant stating "we don't know what a woman's story sounds like because we've never heard one" (p. 79). To help to resolve this issue, feminist narrative inquiry requires that special attention be paid to the differences that exist in the content, structure, style, and form of the stories told by women and men, respectively (Hilfinger-Messias & DeJoseph, 2004). Once collected, these stories can be contrasted with one another, as well as with dominant ways of thinking about a topic within a given society, in order to critically examine ways that power and oppression may be operating (Peters, Jackson & Rudge, 2007). My application of feminist narrative inquiry in this project acknowledges the gendering of experiences and stories in both the interview approach and the writing of couples' narratives (also described in greater detail in chapter four).

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has carefully outlined the epistemological, theoretical and methodological approaches to my research aimed at exploring the experiences of academic trainee decision-making surrounding first-time parenthood. It began with an outline of mainstream epistemological approaches to research that have historically dominated scientific and social scientific research. This helped to lay the groundwork for a discussion into the ways feminist theory, practice, and feminist qualitative research have responded to these mainstream approaches. Having established this knowledge base for the reader, it introduced the notion of feminist standpoint theory and detailed the specific ways it was utilized in this work. This theoretical discussion was capped off with a brief outline of my own feminist research beliefs. The chapter concluded with a description of the methodology I chose to employ in this project—narrative inquiry—as well as a summary of the ways this methodology can incorporate feminist research traditions.

Chapter Four: Methods

Chapter four supplies a detailed examination of the research methods employed in this dissertation project. To begin, I provide the rationale behind the selection of the research site and the carrying out of a key informant meeting, in addition to a description of the participant criteria and recruitment strategies utilized. Following this, I consider the power dynamics at play in a research interview environment before discussing my interview schedule, approach, and practices through the lens of feminist narrative research. Having laid out all of these elements, I provide some reflection on my processes and positioning as a researcher before engaging in some exploration of the ethical considerations involved with this inquiry. The chapter concludes with a discussion about my data interpretation approach. It should be noted that approval for all aspects of this project was obtained from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics in January 2014.

4.1 The Research Site

The research site for my study was a medium-sized, secular university in Southern Ontario that boasts a full-time graduate student population of 4128 individuals as of 2015/2016 (of these, 1748 are doctoral trainees). Additionally, as of 2013, the university is also home to a postdoctoral trainee population of several hundred individuals. Overall, this particular university site was selected for three reasons. First, the institution's reputation as a producer of high quality graduates suggests that it would likely attract doctoral students and, potentially, postdoctoral trainees, that engage in a large amount of research activity. Consequently, they would be more likely to pursue demanding positions following their training. This particular detail is important, in that such trainees are likely to have demanding work schedules—both during their training and beyond. Therefore, these individuals and their partners may find the idea of also managing the role of parent a challenging endeavour. Second, the relatively diverse nature of the university's faculties (six in total) allowed for a varied participant population that could speak to the differences in expectations and experiences across disciplines. Third, the university is an institution that offers partially paid parental leave and subsidized, onsite daycare to its graduate student population—both potentially important factors in the family planning within the participant group.

4.2 Key Informant Meeting

Prior to beginning the participant interviews with couples, I conducted an informal information gathering meeting with a key informant at the university with expert knowledge related to the research area (i.e. a senior level administrator who worked with graduate students). Tracy (2013) defines key research informants as individuals who are “experienced and savvy in the scene [of research], who can articulate stories and explanations that others would not” (pp. 140). She proposes that taking the time to meet with such individuals can better inform the researcher about the subtleties of their research site. My specific goal with this meeting was to learn more about the climate surrounding academic trainee parenthood on the university campus under study. Additionally, I hoped that the meeting would help me to locate information and resources that could be of potential use to participants.

While I did not necessarily learn a tremendous amount of new information during this informant meeting, the individual was able to alert me to an upcoming ‘lunch and learn’ session dedicated to the topic of graduate student parenthood on campus which I subsequently attended. At this lunchtime event, issues of parental leave, midwifery services, and an on-campus health clinic accessible to graduate students and their families were discussed. This event was run by a women’s organization on campus and was attended by roughly 20 graduate students and postdoctoral trainees, including one of the future participants in my study. I found this event particularly useful as a researcher, in that it allowed me to ascertain the types of questions trainees on campus had regarding the topic of academic parenthood. This information later helped me to better hone some of the topic questions explored in the research interviews.

4.3 Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment for my study took place between January and March of 2014 and involved several strategies. First, a recruitment email was circulated in January 2014 via two listservs managed by the university’s Graduate Studies Office; one listserv targeted all current graduate students and the other targeted current postdoctoral trainees. A copy of this email can be found in Appendix A. This particular communication strategy was selected because it allowed a large number of individuals to be made aware of the study and provided potential

participant couples with the opportunity to privately discuss the project without feeling any direct pressure regarding participation. This first recruitment email solicited interest from several dozen individuals—many of whom were already graduate student or postdoctoral trainee parents—and eventually helped secure six couples who were interested in participating and met the necessary participant criteria (see section 4.4 in this chapter for a description of this criteria). To solicit increased participation, a second recruitment email was circulated via the same two listservs in late February of 2014 and generated interest from an additional three couples who also met the participant criteria. A recruitment flyer (see Appendix B) was also utilized to promote the project across campus and access potential participants who might not subscribe to the particular listservs utilized. These flyers were posted in the weeks separating the first and second recruitment emails (February, 2015) and specifically targeted the buildings that housed academic faculties that, at the time, did not have as much representation within the participant group. Finally, one couple was recruited in-person, as they were interested in participating in the project and knew me personally. Consequently, 10 couples in total were recruited.

4.4 Participant Criteria

Recruitment for this project included a purposive group of couples of typical childbearing age in Canada (i.e. between the ages of 18-50 years) in a committed (i.e. a mutually agreed upon commitment by two partners to one another) relationship in which either one or both individuals were in the process of completing doctoral or postdoctoral training at the selected university site. Tracy (2013) describes purposive sampling as a sampling strategy that involves “choosing a meaningful sample that fits the parameters of the project’s research questions and goals” (pp. 155). Consequently, couples who were pregnant, actively thinking about becoming pregnant for the first time, or who were in the process of adopting or fostering their first child could be included in the study. Couples who already had at least one child were excluded, as my intention with the study was to examine the motivations for first-time parenthood among those who had yet to cross the precipice into parenthood, as well as how their decisions might be influenced by academic training. I felt that couples who had already had a child and were immersed in the process of juggling parenthood and academia represented a different experience and, therefore, would be best

served by a separate investigative study. Couples who were completing Master's training were also excluded, as this graduate degree generally involves a shorter time commitment from students and, arguably, requires less general life upheaval (e.g. long term financial or relocation requirements) on the part of trainees and their families. Finally, the participant criteria for this project was kept inclusive to a variety of families, including same-sex couples and couples pursuing parenthood through alternative means such as adoption, surrogacy, or fostering. In keeping with feminist standpoint theory's requirement that certain standpoints not be privileged above others, all of the couples who contacted me expressing interest in the study who also met the basic selection criteria listed above were invited to participate. In total, 10 heterosexual couples thinking about or pursuing parenthood of their own biological children began and completed the full interview process. Unfortunately, as none of the participants identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans, I was unable to explore the potentially nuanced experiences of individuals from these groups. Additionally, I was unable to explore the experiences of individuals pursuing parenthood via adoption or foster programs.

As stated previously, efforts were made via the posting of flyers to recruit couples from a variety of disciplines and faculties. Such efforts were necessary to reduce the possibility of epistemic relativism by allowing me to determine whether the expectations regarding work commitment and family might differ based on one's program of study. In the end, I was able to obtain at least one couple from four of the six faculties at the research university site. While I contemplated recruiting couples from other universities in the area, I eventually decided that such a strategy might create a bit too much diversity with regard to participant experiences for a doctoral project, as each university could have a different culture and approach to managing trainee parental leave and parenthood concerns.

Prior to beginning any interviews, I screened all of the potential participants individually to assess their suitability for the project (i.e. each member of a couple was contacted separately via email). For a script of this pre-screening procedure, please see Appendix C. This process was particularly important to ensure that those couples choosing to participate in the study were 'on the same page' with regard to their decision-making about having their first child (i.e. in agreement about pursuing this endeavor). This pre-screening step was also intended to decrease the likelihood of a situation where I would need to play 'moderator' in a

conflict within a couple (i.e. one individual using the research interview as a way of pressuring their partner into having a child). Following pre-screening, those couples still interested in participating were given an information letter explaining the project (see Appendix D) and were each asked to provide written consent to participate in two active interviews: one alone and one with their partner (see Appendix E).

4.5 Interview Methods

Interviews—whether they be for a journalistic piece, an employment opportunity, or a research study—represent a distinct a movement of our private selves into the public sphere, suggesting that they require sensitivity on the part of the interviewer with regard to the ways interviewees are approached and engaged (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti & McKinney, 2012). Indeed, interviews can create an unbalanced power dynamic that places both the interviewer and interviewee in more dominant (i.e. asking the questions, sharing little to no personal information) and more subordinate (i.e. answering the questions, sharing personal information) positions, respectively. Several feminist investigators, including those utilizing feminist narrative inquiry, have attended to this particular concern in their approach to interviewing by paying keen attention to the notion of social location within the context of research interviews (DeVault & Gross, 2012).

While individuals typically possess the identities of ‘researcher’ or ‘participant’ in an interview environment, DeVault and Gross (2012) remind us that they also bring with them the identities that they occupy in the world outside research (e.g. ‘woman’, ‘father’, ‘employee’, ‘Asian-born Canadian’, ‘humanist’). Such identities are particularly important to the participant/researcher exchange involved with narrative research, in that social roles and location—in addition to the values, preconceptions, and experience that accompany them—are essential to the telling of narratives. Indeed, who we are, the experiences that we have had, our relationships with others, and the meaning we attach to events shape how we narrate our lives (Clandinin, 2013). The uniqueness of our lives and experiences, understandably, can illuminate the ways that we are different from others, an idea that holds particular importance to a qualitative research environment. However, concern has been raised about the potential for extreme ‘difference’ between the researcher and participant to create research

environments that impede what information is disclosed and how it can be interpreted (DeVault & Gross, 2012).

To resolve these issues of difference, some feminist researchers (Humphries, 1997; McKeown, 2015) have experimented with inquiry which pairs researchers and participants who share major similarities (e.g. women interviewing women, individuals interviewing those of the same ethnic group or profession). These similarities, it has been argued, may help feminist researchers to build rapport and find common ground in experience or perspectives (DeVault & Gross, 2012). Other feminist scholars have argued that researchers should push for difference between themselves and participants in interviews to unearth and explore issues of social position, power, and privilege (Sehgal, 2009; Presser, 2009). Examples of this type of interviewing strategy could include interviews in which a woman interviews a man (McKee & O'Brien, 1983; Wiersma & Chesser, 2011; Williams & Heikes, 1993). Having now established the complicated power dynamic that often exists within an interview setting, I will outline the interview schedule that I employed in this project below.

4.5.1 Interview Schedule

For the purposes of this work, I asked each of the ten recruited couples to participate in a series of three in-depth interviews (i.e. one interview with each partner independently, followed by one interview with the couple together). Consequently, 30 interviews in total were completed during the data collection phase. The rationale behind the individual interviews was to provide participants with the opportunity to narrate their own stories about personal motivations, concerns, and obstacles surrounding parenthood and the academy independent from their partner. Additionally, individual interviews offered the opportunity for me to explore the gendered nature of participant experiences. The interviews with couples were intended to focus more on how the decision-making process surrounding parenthood, academic training, and work/family life might be experienced as a partner unit.

One particular benefit of this interview schedule was that it provided me with a greater amount of time to engage with participants over the course of several interviews to “revisit and revise the narratives that we [produced] together” (DeVault & Gross, 2012, pp. 214). With all the participant couples, the individual interviews were scheduled to take place prior

to the couple's interviews to allow space to explore individual experiences and reflections before tackling the complexity of making and managing family planning decisions as a partner unit. This schedule also allowed me to have some time to consider the ideas that the individuals discussed independently within their interviews and how they might relate to the larger 'story' that the couple might tell together. I recorded these ideas as notes in my journal and did my best to incorporate some discussion about these themes in the couples' interview.

As much as their schedules permitted, I did my best to arrange individual and couples' interviews at least a day apart, to allow time for participants to reflect on their own or with each other at home before reconvening for the couple's interview. I made a point to encourage each participant to share what we had discussed in the individual interview, to whatever extent they felt comfortable, with their partner at home and to keep a mental note of any topics they felt they wanted to explore together. This request, however, was interpreted in ways I did not expect by several couples. This particular observation is one that I will explore further in section 4.6 (Researcher Reflections on Process and Positioning) in this chapter.

4.5.2 Interviewing Approach

Taking into account my role as both an insider and outsider in the context of this feminist project, in addition to feminist narrative inquiry's assertion that interviewers should follow participants "down their own trails" of experience (Riessman, 2008, pp. 24), I opted to utilize an in-depth, active interviewing approach in this work. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) explain that active interviews provide "an occasion for purposefully animated participants to construct version of reality interactionally rather than merely purvey data" (pp. 14). Within active interviews, the role of the interviewer is to "incite respondents' answers, virtually activating narrative production...by indicating—even suggesting—narrative positions, resources, orientations and precedents" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 123). As a result, the active interview is a two-way informational exchange.

Unlike semi-structured interviews, where an investigator is aware of all of the questions that will be asked in an interview (Morse, 2012), the active interviewer's question guide serves as just that—a guide for questioning (Dupuis, 1999). Indeed, in some active interviews, the guide may be used extensively; however, in other interviews, the guide may be

used sparsely and referred to only sporadically (Dupuis, 1999). This latter scenario was very much the case in many of the interviews in my study, where I found myself only looking at the guide at the beginning and end of an interview, purely to check that we had covered the major topic areas that I had intended to explore. Active interviews are, however, more structured than conversational interviews which involve the “spontaneous generation of questions in a natural interaction” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, pp. 239). While active interviews can have a conversational tone (i.e. they do not operate as a list of questions asked only by the interviewer and answered only by the interviewee), investigators using active interviews are still somewhat directed by the flow of the conversation (Dupuis, 1999).

4.5.3 Interviewing Practices

All of the participant interviews completed for my study occurred between February and April of 2014. Most interviews took between one and two hours, however these interview times were largely dictated by the amount of information the participant(s) wished to disclose. All of the interviews were audio-recorded with the participants’ consent (using either the All That Recorder™ app for my Android cell phone or the MP3 Skype Recorder™). With regard to the timing and location of the interviews, efforts were made to schedule interviews in a place where the participant was comfortable and at a time that worked around their work and/or leisure schedules. As a result, most of the interviews took place on campus, typically in the late afternoon or early evening. Specifically, 23 interviews took place in a private, reserved room in a building on the research site. Two additional interviews took place in the home of one participant couple, as I was already personally familiar with both individuals and felt comfortable completing these interviews off-site. The remaining five interviews were completed with the participants using the telecommunications software Skype™.

Given the hectic schedules of graduate students and postdoctoral trainees, I was aware when embarking on this project that I would likely need to consider offering participants multiple modes of completing interviews (e.g. in-person interviews, telephone interviews, Skype interviews). Such foresight, as it turns out, proved to be rather advantageous. While the traditional face-to-face tape recorded research interview offers a variety of positive qualities (i.e. allows the interviewer to observe participant body language and subtle gestures, can

allow for the building of great rapport between interviewee and interviewer simply due to physical proximity), I found that it was often difficult to find a time and/or space to complete an in-person interview for this academic trainee population. For example, some of the participants lived in cities that were several hours away from the university site and commuted to campus infrequently, making interview scheduling—particularly with regard to the couples' interview—problematic. Additionally, one participant couple included a pregnant doctoral student who was on exchange abroad at the time of data collection. As she was due to give birth shortly after she returned to Canada, an in-person interview would have been extremely challenging to arrange.

In these instances, Skype proved to be a handy interview tool, as it was free for students to download, worked on a variety of computer operating systems, was relatively simple to operate, and provided a video option to allow myself and the interviewee to interact using facial expressions or body gestures. Matthews and Cramer (2008) have suggested that internet technologies such as Skype can be particularly useful for the purposes of inclusivity in research, in that these modes of contact can allow access to individuals who might otherwise be excluded based on geography. Unfortunately, several of the Skype interviews encountered technical difficulties (i.e. dropped calls or garbled voice quality during specific segments), which proved frustrating for both myself and the participants. Such drawbacks have been described previously in the literature (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010); however, I would still assert that Skype (and, potentially, similar telecommunications software) is a valuable technology for interview research.

For the purposes of this project, an interview guide was utilized during all of the research interviews (see Appendix F for the interview guide for doctoral students/postdoctoral trainees, Appendix G for the interview guide for non-trainee partners, and Appendix H for the couple's interview guide). Interview topics, as opposed to an explicit line of questioning, were used to allow participants the space to answer freely and to direct conversation to areas they felt were particularly important. This particular strategy also adheres to feminist approaches to narrative inquiry (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Riessman, 2008). Participants were also specifically reminded about their right to refrain from discussing any uncomfortable topic areas during all of their interviews prior to beginning any conversations with me. After

completing all of their interviews, each couple was provided with a list of useful resources related to managing work/life stresses and making family planning-based decisions as an academic trainee (see Appendix I), as well as a \$25 gift certificate for Chapters/Indigo® to thank them for their time.

While it is often customary for qualitative researchers to take notes during the data collection process, I opted not to typically take notes during the interview process. My rationale behind this choice was a concern that the note-taking process might disrupt my conversations with participants (i.e. might cause me to lose eye contact or lose my train of thought) and impact what they felt comfortable disclosing. I instead chose to wait until after the interviews to record field notes related to the content of the interviews, the dynamics at play between participants or between myself and the participant(s), and additional observations. These notes later became useful as I began my data analysis and sought to conceptualize and interpret the participants' narratives.

As stated previously, since the interviews employed an active (and thus, interactional) approach, they were not one-sided conversations. Resisting any belief that my experiences and stories could 'bias' the words of the participants (Larson, 1997), I shared my experiences as a student, as a married woman, and as an individual also struggling with decisions about becoming a parent during my academic training. My rationale for this sharing act stemmed from my feminist commitment to disrupting the power dynamic in my interactions with participants, in that I was also making myself vulnerable—a sentiment echoed by many feminist researchers (Pillow, 2003; Watts, 2006; Wasserfall, 1997) and feminist narrative researchers alike (Riessman, 2008).

Through this sharing of myself, I wanted to provide participants with some idea about my motivations for conducting this research by positioning myself as a member of the group under study. Additionally, in the spirit of narrative inquiry's focus on relationships in the telling of stories (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Caine, 2008), I wanted to clearly provide participants with a 'collaborator' (i.e. myself) with whom they could help to make sense of their own stories (Larson, 1997). Indeed, Clandinin (2013) suggests that the dynamic interplay that typically occurs in a narrative interview setting can create "a space for the

stories of both participants and researchers to be composed and heard” (pp. 45). While some of the participants treated my disclosures purely as moments where they could take a break from talking (and thus, did not appear to process the information), others found ways to relate their stories to my own, build off of them, or ask questions of me to make sense of their thoughts or experiences. To me, these moments demonstrated the ways that active interviewing can prove extremely useful for the purposes of feminist narrative research.

4.6 Researcher Reflections on Process and Positioning

While much of my work for this project necessitated a dynamic interplay with others, I have also been cognizant of my need, as a feminist researcher, to practice reflexivity. For me, this process of critical self-awareness began very early in my research journey. I vividly remember the day when the initial recruitment email was sent out to the various listservs at the university research site. I felt a certain degree of trepidation about whether it would be successful at its task. Would anyone respond to my research call? Would my fellow academic trainees find the mere concept of this project unnecessary? Would they question my research motivations? It turns out these fears were largely unfounded.

4.6.1 On Responses to the Call for Participants

Within hours of the recruitment email being sent, my inbox was flooded with emails from trainees expressing interest in the project. Some emails came from pregnant trainees or the trainee partners of pregnant individuals eager to share their experiences and joy about becoming new parents. Other emails came from trainees who had just had children and wanted to speak about the difficulties they faced as academic trainee parents. Still other emails came from graduate students and postdoctoral trainees with multiple children who wanted to share the wisdom they had learned in the ‘trenches’ as trainee parents. One email in particular came from a professor at a university in another area of the province who had been forwarded my recruitment call by a friend. She had written simply to express her support for my work.

I also feel it necessary to mention that I did receive one negative email in relation to my recruitment call from an anonymous individual who accused me of being a ‘mole’ for the

university site who would discourage trainee parenthood. Though slightly hurt by this accusation, I did take the time to politely respond to the sender to explain my reasons for pursuing this area of research and offer the opportunity. I did not receive a reply. Such, as I have been told, are the realities of research.

While I made quick work of scheduling pre-screening interviews for all the individuals who appeared to meet the basic criteria for my study, the task of turning away trainees who were already parents was a difficult one for me. This group, in many ways, had an immense amount of knowledge that could be extremely valuable to my area of study, but these individuals were at a different stage in their family stories. From the start, my intention with this project has always been to investigate the reasons academic trainees make the decision to become parents and how they see their journey unfolding. Interviewing student parents who had already had their children felt retrospective and, consequently, I felt that their stories deserved a separate future study. In keeping with feminist research's focus on reciprocity, I did my best to provide these individuals with resources that could be of use to them (i.e. an abbreviated list of 'useful resources' list that can be found in Appendix J).

4.6.2 On Interactions with Participants

My position as both an insider (i.e. a trainee interested in parenthood) and outsider (i.e. a researcher; a woman interviewing a man, a doctoral student interviewing a postdoctoral trainee or academic partner) in this participant group also created a fascinating area for reflexive interrogation. Specifically, I found that each of these roles were reinforced by participants within the context of the research interview. My insider role, for instance, could be viewed to be reinforced subtly through the use of 'professional shorthand' (i.e. slang or abbreviations commonly used in a particular field of work or study) on the part of academic trainee participants (Bell & Nutt, 2002; Watts, 2006). These individuals sometimes used terms like 'PI', 'comps', or 'postdoc' to describe their academic supervisors, comprehensive exams, and postdoctoral positions, fully expecting that I would understand these terms as a doctoral student (indeed, I did). In these moments, I felt that participants were expressing a sense of comradery with regard to our shared status as academic trainees, a sentiment which has the ability to build a degree of intimacy in the interview exchange (Humphries, 1997; Oakley,

2004). I did my best to nurture these acknowledgements of my possession of insider knowledge by making a conscious effort to relate my experiences to those of the participants (e.g. making statements like “I remember how stressed out I was during my comps. Did you have a similar experience?”).

My outsider status, however, was also reinforced by certain participant exchanges in my research. As a result of my training and experience as a woman conducting feminist gendered research, I found myself drawn to the aspects of participant narratives related to gender, privilege, and subjugation expressed both overtly and subtly. Given that I employed an active interview approach in my study, I used the dynamic interplay of the participant exchanges to delve into these topics with individuals and couples (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). In the moments when I would attempt to explore a gendered interpretation of a participants’ statements, I occasionally found myself being corrected by individuals. In particular, I found that discussions with male participants about the ways that they could be privileged, either within the academy or family were often met with pushback or defensiveness. In these moments, I had a sense that some participants were seeking to instill in me a sense that I was unable to understand their experience, possibly due to my role as a woman or a feminist gender researcher. This had the effect of creating a divide between myself and the participant, thus I was on the outside looking in as an inquirer. Overall, I feel that my simultaneous ability to occupy both an insider and outsider role in the project very much supports Fine’s notion that “researchers [should] probe how we are in relation with the context we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations” (1994, p. 72).

Another aspect of the participant interaction process I found particularly intriguing was the extent to which the participants cared about the quality of the data they were providing. In hindsight, this observation is perhaps not surprising, given that the participants represented a trainee population versed in research procedures and data quality. These participant concerns were particularly evident in conversations about my statement that couples should feel free to discuss whatever content they wanted with their partners following the individual interviews. While some couples appeared to have had some informal discussions at home about the interview content and typically brought these conversations up in the couples’ interview, other couples expressed feeling as though such discussion would ‘disrupt’ the data collection

process and could lead to bias. This concern over bias was the most pronounced in couples where one or both partners were engaged in post-positivistic forms of inquiry in their doctoral or postdoctoral work, indicating that they may have been unfamiliar with constructivist or interpretivist forms of inquiry. Despite these misunderstandings, I remain deeply appreciative of the altruism that many of my research participants displayed towards both myself and this work.

Finally, the location in which my interactions with participants also requires a degree of critical reflection. To reiterate, the vast majority of the interviews for this project took place in a room located on the campus of the university study site. This room, though somewhat convenient for participants, was quite stark with regard to decoration and was not overly conducive to creating a comfortable and relaxed environment in which to converse (e.g. desks separated the interviewer and interviewee; the room was much larger than what would be necessary for two or three individuals; the chairs were somewhat uncomfortable). In hindsight, I believe that the interview experience for both the participants and myself could have been improved with the selection of a less formal interview setting. In future, I would potentially experiment with the use of alternate interview venues, including lounge-style rooms with comfortable chairs, lunch interviews which could be conducted in a private setting but using the act of eating to ‘informalize’ the interview process, or interview walks around campus (Larson, 1997).

4.6.3 On Conducting Feminist Qualitative Research

Being familiar with the process of qualitative research and interviewing through my Masters project and research assistant work, I was aware that these types of participant/researcher exchanges can potentially be emotional in nature. Indeed, it has been argued that feminist approaches to narrative inquiry require “emotional attentiveness and engagement” on the part of the interviewer (Riessman, 2008, p. 24). While I would like to think that I was prepared for the expressions of laughter, tears, anger, and frustration on the part of participants going into the interview process, I now sense that I underestimated my own emotional response to the participants. Being a member of the group under study and struggling with many of the same issues that the participants faced—issues I often brought

these up in the interviews—made emotional detachment in the interview process an absolute impossibility for me. As a result, I found myself becoming quite emotionally drained after several weeks of interviewing—a feeling I would describe as ‘numb’. In addition, I found the emotional ‘aftershocks’ of these interviews infiltrating my day-to-day life, in the form of my own tears, worry, or anger. They also temporarily impacted my relationship with my own intimate partner.

Such emotions do not appear to be uncommon in qualitative research. Indeed, Dupuis (1999) has argued that “the very nature of doing qualitative research makes us more vulnerable to intense emotional reactions (p. 52). Taking Dupuis’ advice to acknowledge the existence of these emotions, I began recording my feelings post-interview in a personal journal. This process helped me to acknowledge what I was feeling and ‘shelve’ some of the emotions until I had the time and emotional energy to dissect them more fully. In a subsequent attempt to mobilize these emotions in a way that could be beneficial to this work, I have chosen to interweave some excerpts from this journal into this dissertation in the form of a prologue, interlude, and epilogue. Overall, I believe that this reflexive process may allow the reader to understand aspects of my own story over the course of this dissertation work.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

As this project involved personal revelations surrounding emotional and intimate aspects of individual lives, as well as the private relationships that exist within couples, it is important to acknowledge the special ethical considerations involved. To begin, the fact that all of the participant couples were drawn from one university’s student and postdoctoral trainee community and, thus, could be identifiable to those reading this work, required that special measures be taken to protect their anonymity. To this end, I gave each participant a pseudonym. Following transcription, the interview transcripts were reviewed and all readily identifiable information (e.g. specific departments, supervisor names, specifics related to research project topics) was removed to help to anonymize the trainees even further. The edited transcripts were then provided to participants for review and approval (i.e. of the accuracy of interview content; that they were emotionally comfortable with their disclosures).

Deeper issues related to participant anonymity, however, were also found to exist in this project. Specifically, despite identifying information having been removed from the transcripts, some of the participants remained concerned about the possibility of being identified and exposed. Consequently, they made requests that I alter the transcripts further and make changes that could potentially decontextualize their stories (Olesen, 2000). For example, one woman was concerned that the disclosure of her specific faculty of study could identify her, thus she suggested that I use a more generalized term to describe this component of her identity. Though small, these types of changes could work together to deposition a participant and change the interpretation of their narrative (Olesen, 2000). However, my feminist commitment to an ethic of care within research required that I make the changes necessary for the participants to feel a degree of protection from discovery. Consequently, I worked with the participants to make all of the changes necessary to ensure their—as well as my own—peace of mind.

As the interviewing process in this project included both individual and couple's interviews, I feel it is important to also address some of the ethical challenges that surrounded this interviewing situation. To begin, to protect some of the privacy associated with individual disclosures and to maintain a certain degree of trust between myself and the participants, I felt it necessary to not disclose any of the information shared in the individual interviews in the couple's interview. Participants were made aware of this protocol before they completed their first interview though, to reiterate, they were encouraged to speak to their partner about the content of the interview privately at home if they wished. Stated more simply, I encouraged participants to share information with their partner on their own terms. To further protect individual participant privacy, interviewees were only provided with interview transcripts for the interviews in which they participated (i.e. their own individual interview and the couples' interview). Finally, when conflict cropped up within the couple's interviews—typically in the form of minor disagreements about details or decisions—I did my best to remain as neutral as possible and simply observe the conflict. It is my feeling that this decision helped to instill in the participants a belief that I did not privilege certain participant perspectives over others, nor was I in a position to 'take sides'. This type of neutral stance has

been promoted previously by Bjornholt and Farstad (2012) in research interviews involving couples.

Once all of the interviews were completed (30 in total), I found myself with a tremendous amount of data to transcribe. While Easton, McComish and Greenberg (2000) have stated that “ideally the researcher should also be the interviewer and the transcriber” (p. 707), I was concerned that completing the transcription process could delay the research process considerably. Thus in the interest of time, I felt that it might be necessary to employ a transcriptionist. As I had initially informed all participants that I would be transcribing the data, a decision intended to limit the exposure of sensitive participant information, my choice to employ an outside transcriptionist posed an ethical challenge for me.

To assist with this decision, I began by researching professional transcriptionist services through the University of Toronto’s Centre for Critical Qualitative Health Research, in addition to seeking out recommendations through individuals in my home department. Once I had identified a transcriptionist and checked her references, I consulted with the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo to determine what would be the most ethical approach to including a third-party transcriptionist in this project. Together we decided that I should request permission via email from all of the participants individually and make clear that they had the right to refuse this request if they felt uncomfortable. A copy of this email can be found in Appendix K. Additionally, I opted to have the transcriptionist sign a confidentiality agreement before beginning her work. It should be noted that the participants were also made aware of this process, as well as the transcriptionist’s professional experience before making their decisions. MacLean, Meyer and Estable (2004) have suggested utilizing such an agreement in all transcription work, not only to protect the confidentiality of participants, but also to recognize the transcriptionist as a professional member of a research team. All but one of the ten participant couples consented to this third party transcription. The one couple that did not cited concerns surrounding the sensitivity of their interview data in the hands of an outside party. As a result, 27 interviews (three interviews for each of the nine couples) were professionally transcribed and I completed the remaining three interview transcripts for the one couple who was uncomfortable with an outside transcriptionist’s involvement.

4.8 Data Analysis

Once stories have been told by research participants, researchers are faced with decisions about how to proceed with their analysis strategy. Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that researchers investigating narrative employ one of two frameworks: analysis of narrative or narrative analysis. He explains that analysis of narrative involves the deconstruction of stories into categorical themes which can be used to explore the meaning of stories. Additionally, Polkinghorne views narrative analysis as a process that works to reconstruct accounts of events into a coherent overall story that honours the original account provided by a participant.

Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) have described a similar process in their description of *holistic* versus *categorical* approaches to narrative analysis. They have described holistic narrative analysis as involving an evaluation of a story as a whole, with elements of a story being compared to other elements within the same story. Conversely, categorical narrative analysis involves the breaking down of narratives into themes which can be used as points of comparison across narratives. Within each of these approaches, there is also a focus on two primary elements—*content* (i.e. what individuals discussed in their stories) or *form* (i.e. how individuals told their stories). Overall, these authors suggest that four primary approaches to narrative inquiry exist: 1) holistic content analysis, 2) holistic form analysis 3) categorical content analysis, and 4) categorical form analysis.

For the purposes of this dissertation work, I have chosen to utilize holistic content analysis to generate separate narratives for each of the ten participant couples. This selection was guided by my goal as a feminist researcher to present the couples' narratives as whole and distinct stories—as opposed to categorical themes generated from stories—which, when told together, convey a standpoint/standpoints on a particular experience of marginalization or subjugation. Indeed, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) suggest that holistic content analysis is well suited to research intending to see “the person as a whole, that is, his or her development to the current position” (pp. 12). At times, however, I have also provided some brief analysis of elements of the narrative form when I felt it could strengthen the individual's/couple's story.

While my overall data analysis process began during the interview process through my reflections on the important ideas raised by participants in the interviews and the discussion of these ideas with the couples, the more formalized holistic content analysis process was largely undertaken only after all of the interviews had been completed. Specifically, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) lay out a five stage approach to holistic content analysis which I chose to incorporate into my research. Their strategy involves stage 1) reading and re-reading transcribed participant data related to a lived experience until patterns become clear, stage 2) recording a global interpretation about what the participant's story included, noting exceptions, contradictions, and unusual features, stage 3) locating important foci of content that will be followed throughout the narrative, stage 4) returning to the participant story to identify the places where these important guideposts become apparent and, stage 5) reflecting on the foci areas identified and the ways they might transition and/or flow throughout the data. A detailed description of my specific approach to each of these stages is provided in the sections below.

4.8.1 Stage One

This stage began with a reading of the digital transcripts in Microsoft Word, followed by a second reading while simultaneously listening to the participants' audio-recorded interview. These steps were intended to 'reanimate' the transcripts for me, as I had already experienced them as an interviewer, and provided an opportunity to add non-verbal interview data into the text files (e.g. long or short pauses, laughing, sarcasm, changes in voice pitch). Perhaps most importantly, these readings acted as a method of verifying that the transcripts were as accurate as possible with regard to what was discussed in the interviews. This type of process has been suggested by Easton, McComish and Greenberg (2000) as essential for any project where the interviewer and transcriptionist are not the same individual.

4.8.2 Stage Two

In stage two, I again read the transcripts, but added the extra step of making written notes in my journal about the key events and elements discussed by the participants in their interviews, as well as my thoughts and feelings about the content and ideas. Separate journal entries were completed for each interview, a process I felt would allow me to view both the

individual and joint narrative told by each couple separately. Additionally, I did not seek to make any comparisons between the stories told between couples and instead focused simply on trying to make sense of the stories told within each couple.

4.8.3 Stage Three

It was at this point in my data analysis that I began trying to locate central foci within the participant data. As the participants discussed a plethora of ongoing concepts within their interviews related to both their academic and personal lives—what Clandinin (2013) might refer to as accounts of lives “in the midst”—I initially broke the stories down into separate content areas that were woven throughout. For example, in one couples’ set of interviews, the concepts of collaborative decision-making, prioritizing family, and seeking out supports were discussed frequently and within a variety of contexts. As a result, I ended up with a wide variety of foci that differed for each couple (i.e. approximately three foci per couple). In discussions with Diana, we came to the conclusion that this analysis process was fragmenting the data into themes and moving towards a categorical content analysis approach. While I could have easily shifted to this narrative analysis strategy, it was important to me that the participant narratives be kept whole and that their substantive content be made comparable for readers (i.e. a similar focus in each narrative to allow readers to compare and contrast experiences). I felt that this last point was essential for me to reach my research goal of articulating a standpoint which conveyed a group knowledge and consciousness about power and oppression—a vital component of standpoint theory (Crasnow, 2014; Harding, 2004; Pohlhaus, 2002). Wanting to stay true to this holistic content analysis approach, I opted to return to the data and re-strategize.

As I re-examined my initial research questions to reground myself, I noticed that they had been ordered in a structure that possessed a logical flow with regard to past, present, and future experiences (i.e. inquiry into academic trainee lifestyle, followed by inquiry into factors impacting family planning decision making, followed by inquiry into how a lifestyle might alter with children). This realization inspired me to model my central analysis foci around variations on these content areas for all the participant interviews, as the content discussed in the interviews focused primarily on these content areas. In the end, I decided to focus on four

foci within each couple. The first area was *current trainee lifestyle*, which included elements such as the academic trainee or partner experience, present work/life management, and present leisure behaviours. The second foci area involved *internal factors impacting family planning decision-making* and included the feelings, personal desires, and physical considerations associated with family planning that were primarily driven only by the individual and/or couple. The third foci area involved *external factors impacting family planning decision-making* and included influencers that existed outside the couple, including family, friends, work pressures, and cultural or societal expectations. The final area of focus was *future trainee lifestyle* and included expectations about how work and life might change after the introduction of a child. While some might view this breaking down of content into areas of foci as fragmentation of the data, I viewed this step as being necessary to the telling of a whole story, with each area being somewhat dependent on the areas that had come before.

4.8.4 Stage Four

Following Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber's (1998) suggestion to colour code central foci areas, I returned to my interview transcript Word documents and used the highlighting feature in the program to colour code segments of text that fit within each of the four content areas of focus. I completed this process for each of the interviews within a couple and then transferred this coded text into separate Word documents—one for each individual within a couple and one for the couple's interview. At this point I also inputted the written notes I had recorded in my journal into these Word documents during stage two to help with the contextualization of the stories.

Once all of these data were organized within the separate documents around the four areas of focus, I began the process of grouping like data together. For example, an individual might discuss the ways that their mother influenced their decision in one component of their interview and mention ways that their siblings were influencing their decisions in another; however, both ideas centre on the idea of an external influence (i.e. family) impacting decision-making. Consequently, I grouped these ideas together. For me, this process helped to illuminate what elements were particularly important for each individual's/couple's story and later helped in the construction of the narratives (Clandinin, 2013).

4.8.5 Stage Five

At this stage, I reviewed the content present in the four content areas and reflected on what the material demonstrated about the experiences of each couple (i.e. a researcher's commentary). In each of these analysis commentaries, I sought to highlight the unique elements that were uncovered in the narratives told by each couple, as well as the ways certain elements related to the narratives told by other participants. It was also at this stage in the data analysis process that transcripts of the colour-coded interviews (along with a legend) were provided via email to the participants for review and reflection (see Appendix L for this follow up correspondence). To reiterate, each participant received only the transcripts for the interviews they participated in. This action was designed to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the information disclosed and to give couples the opportunity to participate in the analysis process (Wise, 2011). Several of the participants asked that specific information be removed or changed to protect their anonymity, and we worked together to make the necessary changes to ensure their overall comfort with the transcripts.

4.9 Representation of Narrative Findings

The decision about how to represent the narrative findings from my study proved to be an extremely challenging one for me, as I had to take into account theoretical, methodological, and practical considerations. While I consulted with several narrative works to get inspiration about how to structure my findings (Gilkey, 2008; Griffin, 2015; McKeown, 2015; Mulcahy, 2012; Zimmermann, 2011), each of these inquiries had only undertaken the telling of individual stories. As I was dealing with couples, my representational strategy could potentially require a more complicated approach.

In my readings, I found that I was drawn to the narrative accounts that were holistic in nature and told a more complete story about an individual experience over time (Griffin, 2015; Zimmermann, 2011). To me, these narratives were often more evocative and allowed the reader a better glimpse into how individuals think, feel, and react. Consequently, I decided to maintain each couple's account as a discrete story that moved through each of the four content foci together. In my first narrative writing attempt, I sought to amalgamate the accounts discussed in one couple's three interviews into a narrative told in the past tense. This

attempt—which ended up being about 20 pages in total—along with a second, more streamlined attempt (i.e. about 10 pages) failed to capture the essence of the couples’ story. While the narratives were true to what the participants had discussed, their structure prevented the reader from connecting with the participants and bogged them down with minute narrative details. Additionally, my combining of the participant experiences did not sit well with the feminist standpoint goals I had set for myself in this project (i.e. the telling of women’s AND men’s experiences separately). Frustrated, I returned to my feminist theoretical framework for inspiration.

One particular statement in the literature by Riessman (2008), which suggested that narrative inquirers should follow participants down their own narrative trails, produced a bit of an ‘ah ha’ moment for me. I began to realize that I had perhaps been trying to tell a collective couples’ story about an experience that was, at times, individualized (i.e. academic trainee versus partner experienced), and at times, shared (i.e. making decisions about whether to start a family together). Consequently, I experimented with a data representation strategy that might capture this complexity which involved the telling of partners’ stories in parallel.

This new narrative representation involved several changes from my previous attempts. First, the telling of each partner’s story occurred in the first person. Second, in the telling of each partner’s story, I moved each participant individually through the four content foci areas I had identified during my data analysis (i.e. current academic trainee lifestyle, internal factors in family planning decision-making, external factors in family planning decision-making, future academic trainee lifestyle). This approach produced what I felt was a much more coherent story for the reader that tended to both the temporal common place (i.e. past, present, and future aspects of an experience) and sociality common place (i.e. cultural, societal, institutional influencers) requirements described by Clandinin (2013) as being essential to narrative constructions. I should note that there was not always a sharp distinction between these foci areas—particularly the internal and external influences, as both often impacted one another. Consequently, I did my best to position these narrative components that appeared to be the best fit for the overall story the participant was telling. Third, I sought to focus the substantive content of the stories on topics that sat at the heart of this feminist project—mainly, explorations of gender, power, and oppression. This particular strategy was aimed at

addressing the achievement component of a feminist standpoint theory (i.e. conveying a politically-oriented group consciousness). However, I also sought to include the segments of individual stories that addressed the academic trainee lifestyle in both gendered and non-gendered ways. Finally, I wanted to incorporate the idea that participants had produced their account in conjunction with others (mainly, myself and/or their partner). Consequently, I tried to make the accounts appear less like a soliloquy and more like an conversation they were having with another individual (e.g. responses to questions, facial gestures, and emotions), a strategy I had seen McKeown (2015) utilize in her work exploring women's experiences of dating. Happy with how these narratives were now being told, I turned my attention to their visual representation.

As I viewed the narratives as being told in parallel with one another, I wanted to find a way to allow the reader to experience the narratives in parallel. The solution seemed simple: split a page in half and display the stories side by side. Indeed, a similar strategy was used recently by Spencer and Paisley (2013) in their feminist duoethnography of women's viewers of the television program, *The Bachelor*; however, in this instance it was two researcher voices—as opposed to two participant voices—being represented.

Within my research, I found that by pasting the partners' stories next to one another I was able to rearrange content to see connections in the narratives that had been more obscured from view previously (i.e. similar topics that each partner discussed from their own viewpoint). Fascinatingly to me, while each participant's narrative existed through the first person viewpoint of 'I', some components fit better through the viewpoint of 'we'. Consequently, I took the relevant text from each partner's narrative, combined them into one voice, and placed this content in the centre of the page. This strategy was undertaken to visually suggest to the reader that this particular perspective was a joint voice concerning a particular experience that was shared within the couple. For each of the joint narratives, I ensured that segments of text that were used were drawn from both partners.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed summary of the methods utilized in my research, as well as justifications for methodological decision-making. It began with a discussion of the

research site and some of the activities completed before the data collection process began (i.e. key informant meetings). This led to a detailed discussion of the participant recruitment and interviewing processes, as well as a reflection on my own experiences as a researcher. Following an articulation of the ethical considerations involved with this work, this chapter concluded with an outline of the data analysis and representational strategies that were utilized.

Chapter Five: Narrative Findings

Chapter five begins with a brief overall demographic profile of the research participants to give the reader a sense about who these individuals were as a group. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the telling of the couples' narrative(s). Each begins with an overview of the couple—gleaned over my three meetings with them—followed by the narratives. At times, these narratives will be told separately, yet in parallel within each couples. At other times, the partner's narratives will converge. Following the telling of the story/stories within each couple, I conclude with my commentary as a researcher regarding the major content areas discussed to contextualize their narrative(s). It should be noted that due to the amount of data contained in these narratives, I have opted to include only abbreviated versions for each couple in this findings section (i.e. while they include content from the four areas of foci—current trainee lifestyle, internal and external factors impacting decision-making, and future trainee lifestyle—these narrative guideposts have been removed). The full narratives organized around the four story guideposts, however, can be found in Appendices L through U.

5.1 Overall Profile of the Participants

Of the ten couples who participated in my study, three were pregnant with planned pregnancies at the time of interviewing, two were actively trying to become pregnant (i.e. they were not using any form of contraception to prevent pregnancy), and the remaining five were seriously considering becoming pregnant in the near future. All of the couples were in heterosexual intimate relationships and demonstrated a cis-gender orientation (i.e. individuals whose gender identity and/or expression is/are aligned with elements traditionally associated with the sex they were assigned at birth) (GLAAD, 2016). Eight of the couples were married, one couple was engaged to be married, and one couple considered themselves to be in a common law relationship. None of the couples expressed a current interest in pursuing adoption to become first time parents.

With regard to the academic demographics of the participants, five couples contained one doctoral trainee and a non-trainee partner and three contained one trainee—doctoral or postdoctoral—and a partner who was enrolled in or had obtained a master's degree. The

remaining two couples contained one doctoral and one postdoctoral trainee. None of the couples who participated were both enrolled in doctoral programs at the time of interviewing. As stated previously, four of the six academic faculties at the research study site are represented among the participant couples. With regard to academic disciplinary breakdown of the trainee participants (12 in total across the 10 couples), four represented STEM disciplines, five represented social science disciplines, one represented a humanities discipline, and two were drawn from the health sciences.

With regard to the general demographics of the participants, the average age of both female and male participants was 29 at the time of interviewing. In general, the age range of participants was between 24 and 35 years for women and 26 and 36 years for men. With regard to the racial/ethnic background of the participants, four of the couples contained two white partners, one couple contained two partners from the Middle East, one couple contained two South Asian partners, and the remaining four couples were interracial (two contained a South Asian female partner and a white male partner, one contained an Asian female and a white male partner, and one contained a white female partner and an Asian male partner). Four of the couples interviewed contained international trainees (one where both partners were from the Middle East, two where both partners were from the United States, and one where both partners were from South Asia) and one couple was from outside the province of Ontario. The remaining five couples contained partners who were both from the province of Ontario. With regard to religious affiliation, three couples contained at least one partner who identified as Catholic (two of these couples contained partners who were both Catholic), one couple was Muslim, one couple was Mormon, and two couples would best be described as spiritually mixed. The remaining couples did not discuss a religious affiliation.

5.2 Important Information for Narrative Reading

For clarity, I should state that the narratives for each couple exist not as a conversation with one another, but as two distinct stories of experience that occasionally merge into a shared narrative. I should also highlight that the participant text in italics represents the actual interview data pulled from the participant interview transcripts. The non-italic text represents additional text that I have added to give statements context or make the sentence easier for the

reader to comprehend. When adding this text, I did my best to preserve the original meaning behind the statement by the participant. Additionally, the reader should be aware that the trainee partner narratives are consistently listed on the left side of each narrative table, except in instances where both partners were doctoral and/or postdoctoral trainees. Finally, as the condensed narratives in this chapter did not provide much space to explore all of the illuminating aspects of each couples' narrative, I chose to include additional narrative elements in the 'Narrative Analysis and Commentary' subsection for each couple. These segments of story are drawn from the more comprehensive narratives included in Appendices L through U. I would recommend that readers review these extended narratives to get a more complete feel for the story(ies) told by each couple.

5.3 Divya and Anish

Divya and Anish were one of only two couples interviewed for my study who were both engaged in doctoral and/or postdoctoral training at the time of their participation. At 32, Divya was a first-year international doctoral trainee in a health sciences discipline. She had married Anish, a 36-year-old postdoctoral STEM trainee, four years earlier after meeting him through a matrimonial website (i.e. a website used to facilitate arranged marriages) in their native India. At the time of our interviews, the couple had been in Canada for approximately three years.

While Divya's parents were supportive of her educational pursuits, even in the face of criticism from relatives (e.g. *as a girl, all of my relatives were talking to my parents, saying "you should marry her as soon as possible"*), they had insisted that she eventually marry. As she explained:

The thing is that in my culture, I was born in the age where the girls are supposed to get married by 18, maximum 22. But since my parents were both employed, they sent me to college...usually girls won't go to college. They will have their primary education and then they get married. That's usually the scenario, even if you're rich or poor. So my only aim was always just to be a good, educated housewife.

She had finally acquiesced to her parents' expectation at the age of 27, shortly after completing her second master's degree abroad. Ambitious and focused, she had stipulated that she would only agree to marry a man who fit her specific and somewhat unorthodox criteria: a

completed doctoral degree and a willingness to support her in her quest to achieve her own abroad. In her words, *I really wanted a guy who was in a PhD so that he could understand my desire*. As Anish was completing his first postdoctoral position in another part of Asia at the time, he fit her search criteria precisely.

Ironically, Anish had also been searching for a wife who held or was completing doctoral degree, a level of education that was incredibly uncommon in the rural Indian village where he had grown up. Indeed, his educational pursuits had been a source of criticism among some in his community, as they were perceived to impede his ability to earn money and support his family:

When I was trying to do my Masters, the neighbour, she was one day asking me, “what are you doing? You should go and work and help support your parents. Why are you still in there spending time and money to study? You are wasting your time and their time, their money”. When I told my father what she said, he said “unless you want to stop studying, you go ahead. I will do my best to support you”. Honestly, I don't know anybody near to the place where I grew up who has gone on to do a PhD. Those willing to get a PhD have a different level, like a different attitude or viewpoint. It's like getting into a priesthood for a Christian. My personal opinion is that those not thinking of making much money, they are the ones that mostly choose a PhD. We are really interested in learning new things and experiencing different things.

While the couple had only met in person two weeks before their wedding, they had conversed for several months over the phone. In this time, they had found that they both shared a devotion to their Christian faith and a deep commitment to their academic pursuits.

From the moment I met Divya, her effervescence was infectious. Even when recounting detailed and honest stories of her hardships in our interviews, she was always able to find the brighter aspects to laugh about. Though I sometimes found myself chuckling along with her stories, I was aware that the giggles and laughter were likely one way that Divya dealt with her disappointments and perceived personal shortcomings (both as a student and as a woman). Anish was decidedly more stoic in his interview, as is demonstrated in the narrative accounts on the following page. A more comprehensive account of these narratives can be found in Appendix M.

5.3.1 Divya and Anish's Narrative(s)

Divya, age 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

I spend the whole day at the university—until 6 o'clock. Then I am preparing both of us dinner. As soon as Anish comes home, we put in a movie [laughs]. The rest of my cooking is in front of the movie. So every day from the day we were married, we have been watching one downloaded movie [laughs]. I also like to clean my home once a week on the weekends. I sweep, I mop. I clean up. It's a woman's duty in our culture [laughs]. I don't think anybody in my lab is doing this kind of schedule at home. I'm also taking care of my family and I'm taking care of my husband's family by having funds for things. If I was not married, I wouldn't need to think about any of these things.

Stephanie: So what if you and Anish decided that you were too busy with your academic careers to have a child?

If I don't have a kid, it means I can't go back to my country. All my cousins, all my friends—they all have kids. I cannot imagine without life without kids. Kids are always blessings. Being a mother, that is our pride and prestige and privilege. Being a Christian means you cannot think that.

Anish, age 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

When I was doing my PhD, I used to stay late. At that time I was not married, so I could come in any morning to catch up. I used to be a workaholic actually, during my PhD. At that time, I had a yearning to finish something in a certain time but now, I prefer to keep everything in the lab. I'm trying to be more optimized with my time, now that I have a family—Divya—and maybe children in the future.

Once you have kids—of course you can study for a PhD. Like Divya, after having kids she could go to school again—it's more difficult though. So we're thinking, and we have a mutual agreement about this, that she should get her PhD finished, or mostly finished, before kids. I think she was the first one to have parents asking about why we don't have a baby yet. I came and said “no, studying is the first thing”. I worry that if the pressure is too much from the family then Divya may just simply quit the PhD. I don't know how much pressure she can take. Whether I take it, or she takes it—but if she can't take it, then it's not right. I want to give her a chance to succeed at this work before having a baby.

Stephanie: The pressure you are receiving from your families seems pretty intense...

We told our families very clearly and frankly “if you ask about a baby, nothing will happen. If you keep asking, we will stop calling.” So, they stopped asking [both laugh]. So the two of us, we kind of go as one when dealing with our families. That's the purpose of family right...of marriage.

People just have the concept that you grow up, get a job, marry, have children. That's just life. That's the common scenario. Our families will call now and they are thinking that either me or Anish have a problem. They will say “oh visit your doctor, a gynaecologist, and see what's wrong with you or your husband” [laughs].

In the family though, the mother is probably the most important role. Men are just supporting them. She does everything and I'm the person that does the paid job. As long as we think we can survive, we are okay. My personal view is that I shouldn't ask anybody for financial help. I can manage on my own with Divya's support.

5.3.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

Divya and Anish's narrative(s) bring attention to the idea that academic trainee lives and decision-making do not occur within religious or cultural vacuums. Indeed, the interaction between culture, religion and gender role expectations within the family proved to be extremely salient for this couple, particularly in the case of Divya. Her statements about it being her *duty*, *pride* and *privilege* as a woman to want and give birth to biological children reflect the strong pronatalist ideology that has been traditionally associated with her faith and, arguably, her South Asian heritage. Additionally, her fears that she could not return home to her family and/or community should she and Anish decide not to have a child also suggest that such beliefs are well-entrenched and reinforced within her local culture, with potential social penalties being applied to those who do not comply. As a result, she could be argued to have experienced merely the illusion of choice in the decision-making process surrounding motherhood.

Divya's sentiments about needing to take care of her husband and family once she had married also reinforce a culturally-influenced belief that women should assume the bulk of the responsibility for unpaid household labour. Divya's original ambition to be an *educated housewife*, as well as her regimented schedule of cooking and cleaning post-marriage reveal her desire to adhere to such expectations. Additionally, her awareness that most of her current female academic peers did not keep such a schedule also implies that she viewed her culture's beliefs concerning women as perhaps being more far-reaching than those commonly seen in Canada.

The culturally-influenced gender role expectations for Anish, as both a South Asian man and a postdoctoral trainee, are also evident in his narrative. For example, his Indian neighbour's questioning of his continued postsecondary studies, instead of choosing to get a job to financially provide for his parents, reveals a cultural expectation that men should be the 'breadwinners' and 'financial guardians' of their families. This could be argued to be further reinforced by Divya's assertion that she was not responsible for assisting her family financially until after she had married and likely had access to her husband's monetary resources. Anish's internalization of this breadwinner role was apparent in his statements

about women running households and men providing financially for their families, as well as his desire to financially subsist without outside intervention. While Anish only briefly touched on the often precarious nature of postdoctoral employment in our interviews together (i.e. funding may only run for one or two years; postdoctoral trainees may be asked to leave if they are not productive), Divya's statements suggest that the couple may have viewed her stipend (and presumably, any maternity or parental leave associated with her graduate student status) as being more secure than her husband's at the postdoctoral level. However, it should be noted that Divya had yet to complete her comprehensive exams at the time of our interviews, thus her funding would be contingent on her passing this academic milestone.

Coming from communities where post-secondary education was frequently used primarily to obtain a stable career (for men) or a desirable choice of husband (for women), both Divya and Anish appeared acutely aware that their desire to pursue doctoral and postdoctoral studies was somewhat unconventional and potentially required sacrifices:

Back in India, my female classmates in school—they all had children, but Anish and I are still in a place where we're just thinking of having children. I'm 32. Many of my classmates have 10-year-old kids. So there have been trade-offs in our lives for education.

Divya appeared to struggle with this particular sacrifice for her studies and the belief that her 'safe' reproductive years (i.e. below 35) were quickly running out:

I know that as you get older, the chances of getting genetic diseases for a baby are higher. The main motivator is that, because I want my kids before I'm 35. Our marriage happened in 2011 when I was 29. Children were not that much of a matter at that time, but now I'm 32. It's been years and Anish and I think that if we wait to have a baby until after my PhD is over, it will be too late.

As a result, she was actively strategizing about the earliest time that she and Anish could begin trying to conceive that would not harm her chances of graduating. Despite being several years older than his wife, Anish expressed no such concerns about his age impacting his chances of becoming a father, highlighting the heavily gendered nature of this specific family planning concern.

One aspect of the individual narratives that was shared by the couple involved their commitment to pursuing their ambitions and supporting each other in the process. As a result,

Divya and Anish had formed a united front (e.g. *the two of us, we kind of go as one*) to deal with the pressures to start a family that they were receiving from their mothers and clergy. In Divya's words, *our marriage was held in the church and there were four priests. So every wedding anniversary, we call them. This is the fourth time that we have called them and each time, the only question (laughs), "where is the kid? We cannot tell that you're successful without that piece"*. The couple had even gone as far as to issue an ultimatum that they would cease calling if their families did not stop inquiring about children, implying that this pressure had perhaps reached an unmanageable or uncomfortable level. Both Divya and Anish appeared to draw strength from one another and their marriage; however Anish portrayed himself as the more protective partner through his desire to want to shield Divya from child-related questioning and provide her space in which to focus on her training. While this sentiment could be argued to be a function of Anish's personality, it could also be rooted in traditional gender expectations for men in many societies (i.e. to act as protectors of their families). Additionally, as Anish was much further along in his training, it could be argued that he was less at risk for attrition from the academy than Divya, who was only in the first year of her doctoral studies.

Despite her family's unwanted pressure, Divya wanted her mother-in-law to come to Canada to assist with childcare should she and Anish have a child. This desire was, in some ways, breaking from a tradition among many young couples in her Indian community to send their children home to their parents for a time if they were working or studying abroad. Divya, however, was adamant that she and Anish wanted their children to be raised in their home (e.g. *I told her "I don't want you to take my child from me. I want it to grow up with us"*. *So then she told me, "okay, then I will take care of your family"*. *So my hope is that she could come to Canada and help*). If family support was not going to be possible, Divya planned to take a parental leave from her studies for childcare purposes. Anish did not express wanting to take any time off from his training for a parental leave, citing concerns that his supervisor and his research might not support this decision (e.g. *well, that depends on what my professor says. I can't be too flexible. I have to be in the lab to do my work. I have to get my hands on things*).

With regard to leisure, Divya and Anish's lifestyle suggests that they devoted the bulk of their time to work (paid in the case of Anish; paid and unpaid in the case of Divya), and used their limited leisure pursuits (i.e. watching a movie each night; window shopping at the mall on weekends) as a way to relax and disconnect from their intellectually demanding lives. Divya also appeared to combine certain passive leisure pursuits (such as watching television) with household chores while her husband did not.

5.4 Vivian and Peter

At 35, Vivian was the oldest female participant interviewed for my study. At the time that we spoke, she was enrolled in the fifth year of her doctoral studies in a humanities discipline, having moved to the local area from a small town in another province. A near fatal accident had inspired her to return to school to pursue her dream of teaching at a post-secondary level. As she put it: I felt like in academia *I'd have a wonderful opportunity to collaborate and build the narratives that were more invested in the type of world I wanted to live in.*

Her fiancé Peter, 26, had moved with Vivian to Ontario seven years prior—only a few months into their relationship—just as she was beginning her master's work. At the time of our interviews, Peter was working part-time at a nearby postsecondary institution and was attending classes to obtain career-related certification. While both contributed financially to the household, Peter's employment was more stable and lucrative, thus relegating him to the position of primary breadwinner during most academic terms. Peter also carried out the bulk of their household chores during the times of year when Vivian's research and university teaching commitments were exceptionally demanding.

Both Vivian and Peter dealt daily with the implications of serious chronic medical conditions. Vivian's conditions and their associated hospitalizations had not only delayed her degree progress (a fact that did not appear to sit well with the academic administrators in her department who felt that she was taking too long to finish the degree), but had also made the possibility of pregnancy unlikely. Recent changes, however, in her diet and lifestyle appeared to have stabilized these issues. As a result, the couple was considering trying to become pregnant in the near future.

My individual interview with Vivian devoted a significant amount of time to discussions of gender in the academy, in large part because Vivian was passionate about the topic. When I specifically asked whether she felt her identity as a woman had impacted her doctoral experience, she replied:

You have a lot of gentlemen in positions of power in the university who didn't have the same experience that you have had. I think that it results in a punitive culture instead of a nurturing culture. I mean the majority of my department— maybe this is just my conception of it, but the people who do all the talking are male. So those are the people with the power. They have a real influence on how things are run and I think a lot of it is according to expectations that are set up by their own experiences in grad school. So they imagine that you're living the life they lived when they went to school. I don't feel hated. I don't feel like I'm persecuted in my department or anything like that, but I feel that the choices I make come with greater consequences than they do for my male peers. I don't think academia is set up very well for women at all.

Intrigued by her observations, I probed a bit further, questioning whether she felt this particular perspective might have more to do with a generational attitude than gender. In response, Vivian replied:

I think it's both generational and gendered actually. I think generational in that access to doctoral studies in the past would have been even more limited than it is now for females. I think that a historical experience was to be moving through one's studies with a peer group of males who moved through the program at approximately the same time, produced comparable qualities of work, and had a comparable amount of support. And when I say support, I don't just mean at department level, but I also mean that, in many cases, they would have had a female partner at home preparing meals, keeping the house clean, doing the things that need to be done to make it so that you live well while they're completing something demanding.

Given Vivian's acknowledgement of the role partners could play in the academic training process, I was interested to compare her perspectives to those of Peter's. A condensed version of their narrative(s) can be found on the following page, while a more extensive version can be found in Appendix N.

5.4.1 Vivian and Peter's Narrative(s)

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

Peter's always been extremely supportive. Usually, he does dishes and I do cooking. Overall, I think as far as division of labour in the house goes, it's good. But lately he's been doing all of it because I just don't have time. I tend to go through periods where my personal life is awesome and then my doctoral work doesn't happen. Or my personal life is non-existent and lots of doctoral work happens. I find it very difficult to strike a balance and maintain my equilibrium.

We just work all the time—we try to make it fun. Like when we are cleaning the house, cooking, or catching up on marking or school work. Don't we sound wonderful? We don't really hang out and we just clean our house and try to make food [both laugh]. Please don't judge us. It's sad.

Stephanie: So if you had a child, could you keep up that work schedule? Would your supervisor or committee worry about your progress?

I think that the assumption is that when you take on this role of parent that you're giving up all other roles. I don't think that's fair. I mean what other role does a person take on where they're expected to not have any other life but that particular role? I can't think of any.

Peter, age 26, partner

I didn't know anything about this city when I moved here for Vivian. I kind of struggled actually. I had to make a big change to the amount of down time I usually prefer to have for myself. I'll typically only have time to do schoolwork in the evenings because I work all day and on the weekends, so that really cuts into the time Vivian and I might spend together. We hang out...working together.

I think Vivian's schedule says a lot about how the academic system has changed. Academics used to be better funded or they didn't have to work outside jobs. In the past, mostly men did PhD programs and their wives, if they were married, would be the one who could do all this other life stuff. The only job they had to do was their dissertation. Maybe they could have kids then because they had a stay-at-home partner. You know, you need time to do a dissertation.

I know that my supervisor would be supportive of me having a child, but I also know that he would be concerned about dealing with the other levels. I have heard so many negatives from people who were having children in my department. They were being told that it was a bad idea. In my department, whenever anyone gets pregnant it's "if you were a serious doctoral student, you wouldn't have done that". I think that regardless of doctoral work, you have to be able to have a life too. I don't think it's fair to be punished for wanting to have a family.

Stephanie So are you concerned that if you had a child before Vivian's done...

She might just leave the program. I don't want her to finish her program if she doesn't want to, but she does want to. I want to just kind of help her through those priorities. I think really for us and kids, it just comes down to time. Like do we have the time and how are we going to make the time or schedule ourselves so that we're going to have time? Are we going to hire someone to help us, or is one of our parents going to be available to help us?

5.4.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

The androcentric history of the academy was a topic that appeared in many of the narratives completed for my research (see Sophia and James, Emma and Edward, Penelope and Louis, Scarlett and Eli, Zhara and Yaser, and Maryann and Jake), but was addressed quite explicitly by Vivian. At several moments in our interviews, she described the male-dominated departmental faculty that she interacted with on a daily basis who held, in her words, a certain degree of *power* over trainee enrollment status, funding, and research success. Indeed, such individuals frequently act as advisors, sit on dissertation committees, and hold important administrative roles (e.g. graduate coordinator, departmental chair) that can have a direct impact on student lives and academic outcomes. While Vivian was clear that she did not feel expressly targeted by these male academics, she did suggest that they likely assumed that her experience and priorities (as a 35-year-old woman and female trainee in 2014) would be similar to their own experiences as male doctoral students years, or even decades prior. As a result, she felt that her perceived failure to live up to the academic expectations of these individuals, with regard to her research achievements and her personal life desires, had labeled her as less *serious* about her studies than many of her peers.

Vivian could be argued, however, to share one support commonly associated with many historical male academics: a partner at home willing to take on the responsibility for household labour and childcare (Peter: *if I don't have time now, how am I going to have time to take care of kids? I would need to be up all night. I want my partner to have a career*). Indeed, Peter's narrative relayed his own encounter with the historically female-dominated 'second shift' phenomenon (Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012), in that he often completed a day of paid work (in addition to school and homework), only to follow it up with a second shift of unpaid chores around the home. His narrative, however, highlights the vital role academic trainee spouses (male or female) likely play in their partner's professional success. It should also be noted that Peter alluded to the androcentric bias traditionally seen within academia, though it remains likely that his perceptions were at least somewhat shaped by Vivian's experiences.

With regard to family planning motivators, Vivian's narrative focuses attention on the negative impact pronatalist ideology may have on women who either cannot or choose not to have children: *there's a lot of pressure on people who don't have children to explain why they don't have children. I think that's kind of weird because it shouldn't really be the default position.* As a woman who had previously not wanted children (due to her own desires for lifestyle freedom and concerns over environmental sustainability), Vivian seemed to have re-evaluated her position once she became aware of her partner's strong desire to become a father. An early term miscarriage, coupled with her fears that her health and age (35) might impact her ability to have a child, had created in her a sense of urgency related to motherhood which, at one moment in our interviews, brought her to tears:

I was sick for a long time... I don't think for a minute my body could have supported a child. I think I was briefly pregnant. Like I did have a positive test which was a few years back but now...

Stephanie: Things just didn't take?

Yeah, physical climate, just didn't work out, [Vivian tears up]. I feel afraid that if I don't try soon I might not be able to.

This sense of time running out was likely exacerbated by her awareness of societal reproductive surveillance (e.g. *as a female body socially, you are everybody's property*)—a point that was further driven home by her mother-in-law's assertion that to be perceived as a good and selfless woman, she needed to have a child [she] *is forever saying "nice women have children... aren't families wonderful? Little children really show you what matters...some people just work too hard and think it's all about them"*).

While he did mention a longing on the part of many men to leave a *legacy* as a motivator for fatherhood, Peter's family desires were largely driven by feelings of love for his partner (e.g. wanting *more of her in the world*). Nevertheless, Peter held *traditional* beliefs about the timing of parenthood in a relationship; mainly, that a couple should be married first. Overall, his narrative focused less on his 'whys' regarding parenthood, and more on the pragmatic issues related to 'how' he and Vivian might manage their future time and finances—a topic Vivian devoted less attention to in her own narrative. Much like Divya

previously, Peter mentioned that he might take parental leave or that the couple might seek out help from family to assist with childcare should that have a child.

Vivian and Peter's leisure outlets were entirely structured around the very limited time in their schedules that was not occupied by work. As such, the couples' shared narrative component suggests that they had found ways to make certain household chores (e.g. cooking or cleaning the house) *fun* by viewing them as opportunities to spend time together as a couple—even if they were merely occupying the same physical space while engaged in different activities. Overall, the couple appeared to value the time they shared together (e.g. *Peter and I, we're still a family and you have to do that family time*). Vivian also drew attention to the extent to which alcohol was often involved in departmental-associated trainee leisure (e.g. *quite frankly, my department's get-togethers at the peer level are always drinking events—always*). The nature and apparent prevalence of this particular leisure choice could be argued to exclude non-drinkers, those wanting to maintain a strictly professional relationship with their peers, or those wanting more family-friendly opportunities.

5.5 Sophia and James

Sophia and James (in their late 20s and early 30s, respectively) had been dating for several years at the time that we first spoke. They had been common-law spouses for much of this time, having originally met through a mutual friend while Sophia was completing her master's degree. While she had not initially planned to complete a PhD (in her words, *I fell into it*), she quickly discovered an intense love for research and academic inquiry and could no longer envision herself pursuing *anything else*. An only child born in Canada to Asian parents, Sophia described some of the care work she was providing for her elderly mother who lived about an hour away (e.g. *it's challenging to support my mom, who is aging, and to balance a busy schedule at home, and to commute to school*). James, conversely, had grown up in a Caucasian family and had spent much of his younger years caring for his younger siblings.

At the time of the interviews, Sophia was enrolled in the second year of a doctoral program in a social science-related discipline and was preparing for her comprehensive exams—an academic milestone she appeared to be quite stressed about. She had also stopped

using any form of birth control to prevent a pregnancy, taking the approach that “*if [a pregnancy] happens, it happens*”. James, conversely, worked full-time and was the primary breadwinner in their relationship.

The individual interviews I completed with Sophia and James were conducted in person, while the couple’s interview was completed via Skype using the video feature. During all of our interviews, both individuals were extremely open about their thoughts and experiences and provided me with a small glimpse into their lives together (e.g. they had small disagreements and side conversations during the couples’ interview). As James was less familiar with the process of qualitative interviewing than his partner, he would often check with me to verify that he was providing sufficient detail in his responses. I did my best to assure him that our interview conversation could head in any direction he felt was important. In my individual interview with Sophia, her story about her experience with unplanned pregnancy was originally discussed after I had already turned off the audio recorder. While I intended not to include this detail in her final narrative, Sophia eventually asked me to turn the recorder back on, as she felt her story could be useful to other academic trainees. Indeed, this disclosure as well as others can be found in the shortened version of the couples’ narrative(s) on the next page, while a more extensive version can be found in Appendix O.

5.5.1 Sophia and James' Narrative(s)

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

I feel like we, as women, have to prove ourselves all the time. We're always on. Gender roles do exist, even when it comes to getting ready in the morning. Like who thinks of making lunches the night before? Who thinks of how everyone is going to get to work? It's not James. It's definitely me.

But, you also have leisure moments which you hold on to for dear life when you're getting through the roughest of rough days. James and I, we take our passions incredibly seriously. I love research, so it's hard to define that line between, "oh yeah, I'm just analyzing data" versus "I'm really interested in this and I'm trying to explore it for my own personal knowledge and growth". James has always found attraction in my commitment to my work. He is a workaholic too, so he respected that about me. So we encourage each other. It's not always the healthiest option, like we do lose our sleep. We do miss these other things, but I think that we've found solace in knowing that one another understands. We're really having a foursome with our careers.

James, early 30s, partner

With PhD students, there's almost a free spirit about them, an understanding that there's something else better out there. When I'm in Sophia's realm, I really try to open myself up and understand. I think it kind of helps me understand her life and the things that she's going through. It helps, makes me a better person, a better spouse. It's interesting because I think some people would give the advice that it's better to be with another PhD student so they understand how you feel, but I don't necessarily agree. As long as you're able to support one another and understand one another, then I don't think there should be any limits on who you date or who you end up marrying.

There are some great things that go with doctoral studies too. You can have flexibility in your schedule, which is great—but at the same time, your work doesn't really leave you. The problem with us is that we're both never really off. There has to be considerable effort for Sophia and I to find time for leisure activities, for even just together time. A lot of our together time is spent in the same room with one another, but working on separate things.

Stephanie: Given all that you have on the go, what is driving your decision-making about children?

I think if pregnancy happens, it happens. I'm not on any birth control, but we're not actively trying to get pregnant. I've actually been pregnant twice before. I ended both pregnancies. The last time was with James, just after I got accepted for my PhD. It was the happiest time of my life and then when I got the news, I thought all of that had suddenly been taken away from me. So [pause] it was mostly my decision to end the pregnancy. At the time, I really felt like I was being selfish and I felt that I wasn't even allowing the opportunity for a baby to be explored. I just said, "no I can't sacrifice this right now. No, this is something I've worked too hard for".

Stephanie: Are outside pressures playing a role in your decision-making at all?

James' mother and my mother play a role—reminding me of my fertility and all that good stuff. We have to be married first before any of that can take place though. We're Catholic, so let's say things have to take place before a baby is 'legitimately welcomed' into our family. No bastards. I think my mom has moved beyond that now though—she's like "I don't care if you get married anymore, let's just have a baby".

I fell and hurt my back last week and my mom was like, "oh my gosh, you won't ever have children now. Be careful with your body". She's THAT type of mom. Sometimes I talk to my mom about school and I tell her "I have this great professor". She'll ask "oh, are they married? Do they have kids?" I'll say "no mom, they don't want to have

I think you establish yourself in your career and you have these items on your list that you want to achieve by a certain age. And 30—I wasn't daunted by the age, but I thought I would have a family by this point in my life. So, we did what most couples do...we got a dog. It fills that void for now—just a little starter kid. We still plan on having kids though. I mean let's face it—if you're going to be doing a PhD, you're going to be talking to somebody that's in their 30s by the time that they're ready to have kids. Quite frankly, to have them before that means not necessarily having that strong financial foundation that you'd likely want to have.

I think the only one that has the pressure is Sophia. I feel like women in general would get the majority of the pressure, probably because they're the ones that have to bear the child. Every time Sophia's mother sees her she'll bring it up in one way or another. I think she is afraid she will die before grandkids...which I can understand and that's what leads to pressure. At the same time that became a big part of the decision—does Sophia do a PhD or not? Her mother was like "oh you're doing your PhD, really?" I ended up actually talking to her about it and eventually she kind of backed off. I basically said "the PhD is going to happen. This is why and you need to get behind it".

kids”. She’ll say “oh, that’s a shame, because why wouldn’t they want to have some of those excellent experiences that they could get with their child?”

Stephanie: So if you were to have a child in the near future, how do you think you’d go about managing all the different aspects of your lives?

We’re kind of experiencing it through our dog. With the dog you start to see—you’re developing these coping skills and different tools that we’ve used to overcome certain difficulties that we face on a day-to-day basis. We’re learning those tools that we’re going to need to use when it comes time for children.

5.5.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

The often all consuming nature of academic trainee life, combined with its frequently lacking 9 to 5 workday, were topics that were highlighted in Sophia and James' narrative(s). Since they frequently lost sleep for their work, and identified themselves as *being in a foursome with their careers*, the couple could certainly be described as work consumed. For Sophia, however, the need to *prove* herself—arguably both as a woman and as a doctoral student—appeared to be at least one of the driver's behind her demanding, self-imposed schedule. Additionally, her status as the lower earning partner seemingly fueled her desire to achieve academically—likely to make up for what she felt she could not provide financially (e.g. *I feel that a lot of the pressure is put on me to be successful, so that I can be a contributing member of this household*).

Even Sophia's leisure was wrapped up in her studies, as she had a difficult time discerning between her research work and a pleasurable activity that she would engage in freely for the purposes of *personal knowledge and growth*. Admiring the purpose that Sophia's work held for her, James was generally supportive of her busy schedule, provided that it did not jeopardize her overall health:

I tell her “*you have to be careful...you don't want to take on the world*”. *You do have your personal limits too, but as long as [pause], as long as one: you're healthy. Two: your body is getting the attention it deserves...go for it. That's kind of my attitude.*

He also viewed his own ability to act as a sounding board for Sophia's stresses to be an important component of their relationship; consequently, he put in effort to understand both her research and professional goals. This arguably singular focus of both partners on work, however, appeared to have been detrimental to the amount of time they had to spend pursuing leisure.

In many ways, Sophia's life outside of academic work functioned around a complex to-do list. Making *lunches*, remembering to *take out the garbage*, arranging transportation, and organizing a *synchronized schedule* were just some of the household tasks that Sophia discussed managing on a day-to-day basis. Like numerous other North American women, Sophia was also managing a third shift of unpaid labour in her work week (Bolton, 2000;

Hochschild, 1997): caring for her aging mother who lived more than an hour away. Sophia also alluded to feeling as though her identity was very much tied to a care role (*I think the stereotypical roles that existed in the 60s still linger*), a notion that may have impacted her perceived ability to also manage the care work associated with a child in the future.

For both Sophia and James, issues of timing were one of the primary motivators behind their family planning. For James, a desire to meet certain age-related milestones, combined with his sense that the couple was financially stable enough to afford a child, appeared to be his primary drivers. For Sophia, the insistent requests of her own aging mother to become a grandparent before she died appeared to be an important influence behind her decision-making. Additionally, by suggesting that Sophia should *be careful with [her] body* to not harm her chances of getting pregnant, or that by not having children, individuals would be missing the *excellent experiences that they could get with their child*, Sophia's mother appeared to be using pronatalist social pressure to sway her daughter's decision-making.

Interestingly, James appeared to have noticed these pressures and the potentially adverse effect they could have on Sophia's academic ambitions. Perhaps fearful that his partner might eventually decide not to pursue a doctorate to appease her mother, he had had a frank discussion with his mother-in-law where he insisted that Sophia be allowed to pursue her own timelines regarding her own life events. Much like Anish in his previous narrative, James' action suggests that he may have been assuming a stereotypically masculine protector role for his partner when he felt she needed support.

Unbeknownst to her mother, Sophia had already had the experience of dealing with a pregnancy at a time that was inopportune academically (i.e. shortly after being accepted into her doctoral program). After some careful consideration, she had eventually opted to terminate this pregnancy. While I was mindful that Sophia's initial reluctance to discuss this experience was likely grounded in a fear of being judged (e.g. for being selfish or too career-minded to carry the pregnancy to term or raise the child), her thoughtful explanation about her feelings and decision-making strategy surrounding the event conveyed that she stood behind her choice. Now that Sophia was approaching a perceived 'secure' period in her studies (i.e. post-comprehensive exams), Sophia appeared more mentally prepared to take on the life altering

role of mother (e.g. *now, I feel like it's a whole different ballgame. I feel like I'm in a different phase of my life. I feel like a baby wouldn't stop me from getting to where I need to be*).

These feelings were reinforced by her experience co-managing pet ownership with James. Indeed, the strategies surrounding care work that the couple was learning together through their dog—strategies they felt would translate over well to a child—were visible in the shared component of their narratives.

5.6 Emma and Edward

At 29 and 30 respectively, Emma and Edward were a unique participant couple, in that they were both completing academic training, but at different institutions. Emma was a first-year social science postdoctoral trainee at the study site. Her husband of nearly six years, Edward, was a fourth-year doctoral trainee (also in the social sciences) at an institution on the other side of the province. Both were living locally together at the time of our interviews in Edward's hometown while he completed his studies at a distance. The couple reported that both of their sets of parents also lived in the area.

Emma appeared to have thrived in an academic environment, having completed her humanities-oriented doctorate in only four years with competitive funding. Shortly after graduation, she had begun her postdoctoral work at the same institution, albeit in a different program. Her mother, a professor at a local university, was a strong influence in her life who had initially discouraged her doctoral pursuits. In Emma's words:

It was a fight with my mom. She wanted me to go into law. She fought me throughout the entirety of my graduate studies—didn't let up when I won a national award in my master's—didn't let up when I won a national award in my PhD—didn't let up at any stage until I defended the dissertation. Then she was happy with that, but she wanted me to go back and do a law degree anyway.

Edward had been a more unlikely academic trainee, having initially pursued work in a trade with his father. Though enjoyable, this work had been hard on his body. Consequently, when a chance arose for Edward to begin a direct-entry doctoral program, he enrolled. In his words: *I didn't really have a preconceived notion about what it would be like, other than it would be work—no ideas or hopes or anything like that.* Edward's doctoral experience had led to his employment with a local think tank, a job that he seemed extremely passionate about

and blended his love of news information gathering with his work: *I find what I do interesting so I read everything news...the Financial Times, The Globe and Mail, whatever, for my own edification. It's a bonus that it's part of my job and part of what I bring to the table at work.* However, this position, combined with his full-time status as a doctoral student had led him to, at times, experience burnout—a situation he acknowledged could impact his relationship with Emma: *I'll get very tired, very burnt out, very cranky and I need to take a week kind of easy. When I do that, I'm probably kind of a shitty person to live with, when I get burnt out like that.* Their relationship was also impacted by the fact that each travelled frequently for work, thus they would sometimes go weeks or even months without spending much time with one another.

At the time of our interviews, Emma and Edward were in the process of deciding when they might want to start trying to have a child. Emma, while not necessarily opposed to the idea of becoming a mother, worried about how the couple might manage household tasks along with their busy schedules and feared that a baby might severely interfere with her participation in competitive running (a leisure activity she used, in part, as a way to control her weight). Indeed, the time Emma spent running—along with the occasional night out with Edward—were some of the only non-work activities she reported engaging in, as described in the following quote:

I work from home a lot, so Edward and I usually get up about 6 a.m. and I'll work from home from 6 to 11 a.m. and then go out for a run. Then I'll work from 1 to 6 p.m. and then do dishes and then work from 7 p.m. to whenever I fall asleep. I really like what I do. Usually I might take one day in a week where I don't do work, but I'll do some errands and Edward and I will go off and maybe go for a walk or go to the bar or that sort of thing.

Edward reported his work schedule to be less structured than his wife's, though equally busy. He also described using the gym and drinking beer as strategies to unwind at the end of the day. This information about the couple serves as a primer for the snapshot of their stories found on the next few pages. A more extensive version of their narratives can be found in Appendix P.

One important element that the reader should be aware of is that this couple's narratives lacked a shared element. Indeed, Emma and Edward's family desires, as well as their

experiences as individuals and trainees, were quite divergent and necessitated a discrete telling of the stories separately. Thus, I have chosen to label their stories as narratives, as opposed to narrative(s).

5.6.1 Emma and Edward's Narratives

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

I'm sort of the bottom of the faculty pecking order because as a postdoc, I am faculty but I'm not full faculty. I sometimes feel a bit of a social pressure from the full faculty to be there as long as they are. Really, I have always been the hardest worker. A big part of my need to work hard and finish my doctorate quickly was that my mom took ten years to do her dissertation. I was always focused on not following that—but she did have my brother in the middle of it. That's just going to affect things, plus she was teaching. Actually, two years ago I was teaching my own course at a local university. I had 80 students and no TA, so it was taking a huge amount of my time. I was also working at things on the research side that really sped up. Then the dishwasher broke...

Stephanie: Oh boy, that type of thing can end relationships.

That's sort of the thing. When the dishwasher broke, it didn't become 'we have to do the dishes'. It became 'I have to do the dishes'. Edward doesn't see that things have to get done. He'll say "I'm sorry, I'm really busy". I'm busy too, so that time comes out of my time. It doesn't occur to him that time management is not just about his time management for his goals—it's time management as a unit. Edward—he really wants kids. I worry if we have them, even if he says "I'll do most of the work", I will just swoop in there and say "I have to because it's my responsibility because I'm the mom". But I do want to

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

I've noticed that there's definitely a tendency amongst some male PhDs and postdocs to try to graft some kind of masculine thing into their work. I think there's definitely a little bit of "I'm a family man, but I'm also an intrepid researcher", a little bit of chest-puffing. For all the liberal pretenses, there's a whole lot of "daddy knows best" and "mom is at home". I think it might be substitution. These are not guys who 200 years ago would have been bushwhacking in Africa and hunting lions—these are guys who would not traditionally be viewed as masculine in a lot of ways.

Stephanie: You and Emma are certainly challenging that androcentric academic model. Do you think it makes a difference in your relationship, having a partner who is also an academic trainee?

They do understand the rhythm of the work, various pressures and what not. I mean I don't think somebody has to have a PhD to understand, but it certainly increases the likelihood that they will. People with PhDs—they've both got golden God damn brains [said sarcastically], so you get into some ridiculous debates. Everybody does have an ego and it is a pursuit where you are encouraged to sell your work and promote yourself,

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

have kids for my own reasons. I want to, for biological reasons and I have some kick-ass names picked...and the idea of shaping a person is also pretty exciting. I just don't want to be the only one doing the work.

Stephanie: What about outside pressures?

My mother puts no pressure on me whatsoever. She says, "never get married, never have kids". The fact that it rolls off my tongue should give you some idea about the impact it has had on me. Some pressure I do get from my girlfriends—they've more entered into that phase now. There seems to be this desire that everyone around them will at least have the same set of priorities. There's this kind of competition where you have to be the busiest. You have to be the most successful. You have to be the closest to that 1950s ideal, and if you aren't, it's because you're selfish.

Stephanie: How do people manage training and children then?

If you have a supportive partner, I think even in academia it can make a big difference. The vast majority of people I know who have been really, really successful do not have big family lives. If they do, either they're very, very well off or the other partner has sort of stepped up to the plate. So one possibility for us is that I would work full-time in the academy and Edward would work part-time and then take care of the kids (or be a stay-

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

so there's certainly a little bit of that 'smartest person in the room' attitude. From time to time, Emma and I try to work on that, keep it at a minimum.

Stephanie: Have these debates turned to children recently at all?

I would rather get a pregnancy done sooner than later. Your body deteriorates as you get older and I've got kind of a dicey back and hip. I don't want to be 60 and having a two-year-old kid running around. The fact that I'm 30 kind of shocks me a little bit. Thirty, and I'm still in this fucking situation...still in school. Anyways, when I die, I'm gone. So what I leave is my kids, and hopefully I have given them a chance to have a decent life. That's important to me. Maybe one thing that gives me a bit of trepidation about having kids is that I can't say "I feel like going somewhere" and just leave them with my parents on a whim. They comes first. If we have children, I also want to make sure that we've got enough financial stability. I'll admit that growing up, my family didn't always have a lot of money. I maybe have a little bit of anxiety about that.

With most couples, I think, you've got one individual who is very career-oriented. The other one does step up—it doesn't mean they don't work, but you can't have both of them going 60 or 70 hours a week and then have kids. I mean it just doesn't work. I have generally been comfortable with the idea of prioritizing Emma's career over mine. I

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

at-home dad). My mother-in-law has also basically said “if you have children, I will babysit all the time. I will literally move in”.

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

figure she's probably got better earning potential than I do, so that's sensible as long as I do something. If I have to cut down on my work and stay at home with the kid, that's not going to shatter my life [laughs].

5.6.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

While Sophia and James' previous narrative(s) touched on busy aspects of trainee life, Emma and Edward demonstrate how schedules and lifestyles can be affected when both partners are trainees. Indeed, between their research, teaching, and outside employment, Emma and Edward routinely maneuvered a day-to-day lifestyle complete with long work days and limited relaxation time with one another. In particular, Edward described periods in their relationship when the commuting involved with their doctoral degrees at different institutions—a reality for some trainee couples—had kept the couple apart (e.g. *we've had periods in the last few years where we barely saw each other for three months*). Despite these jam-packed schedules, Edward and Emma also needed to manage chores and struggled with equitable divisions of household labour within their relationship.

Embedded throughout Emma's narrative was a stewing frustration over the disproportionate amount of household labour she felt she was completing compared to her husband, despite being engaged in equally demanding training. While Emma expressly stated that she did not feel that Edward expected her to complete household chores, her concerns appeared to relate to her belief that her husband was ignorant about the concept of time as a co-managed household resource. It could also be speculated that her concerns had bled into her perceptions of other potential work/life management situations, mainly that she might need to add an extra shift of housework and childcare to her already full plate should the couple have a child.

As a trainee who frequently worked from home—a situation common among academic trainees within the social sciences and humanities—Emma could be argued to have a working environment that made the separation of paid work, household labour, and leisure time challenging. This reality helps to contextualize the importance of her primary leisure outlet—running. Indeed, the activity not only provided her with physical benefits, but also allowed her to remove herself from this ambiguous work/leisure space for hours at a time, thereby providing her with a psychological break from 'work'.

Notions of gender influence were also found to reside within university life for this couple, as both Emma and Edward separately described the gendered nature of the academy

that they had personally observed. For Emma, her status as a female postdoctoral trainee—a traditionally less common role for women—contributed to her sense that higher productivity expectations were being placed upon her than her male counterparts. For Edward, the historically androcentric nature of academia contributed to the formation of what he perceived as a masculine academic persona: the intrepid researcher/family man. In Edward’s opinion, this identity helped many male academics signify that they ‘had it all’ with regard to their professional and personal life.

Discussions about family planning between the couple appeared to be very much driven by Edward, whose age and desires to leave a legacy appeared to be influencing his wanting to become a father. Nevertheless, he was cognizant of the financial realities associated with becoming a parent whilst still in school (i.e. a time that can be financially unstable for trainees) and worried about how he might react to the restrictions a child would place on his ability to come and go as he pleased. Indeed, like many trainees, freedom with one’s schedule appeared to be an occupational ‘perk’ that Edward enjoyed and did not appear overly eager to give up.

Unlike many of the previous couples, Emma and Edward were not being heavily pressured by their families to have children. In fact, Emma’s mother, a professor whom Emma’s described as having *sacrificed her own academic career for her children*, had driven into Emma the opposing mantra of ‘*never get married, never have kids*’. While it remains difficult to determine whether Emma’s arguable hesitation related to children was the direct result of her mother’s expressed viewpoint, the fact that the mantra still rolled off Emma’s tongue suggests that it had been heavily internalized on her part. Peer pressure also appeared to be having an effect on Emma’s family planning, as she described how many of her female friends were following and perpetuating social expectations surrounding motherhood. Indeed, within this friend group, traditional gender role expectations for women appeared to be present, in addition to echoes of pronatalist ideology surrounding the need for women to place motherhood above other needs.

Much like many of the other couples in my study, Emma and Edward planned to draw on support from their parents should they have a child during their training. As the couples’

parents lived in the immediate geographical area, this caregiving support would like be easy to arrange (as opposed to trainees who had extended family living further away). Additionally, the couple seemed united around the idea of Edward taking on the role of primary caregiver and foregoing his own career growth, at least for a time. Such a choice would certainly challenge traditional gendered care role expectations, but made logical sense for the couple, given Emma's immense dedication to her career and Edward's apparent ambivalence with regard to his own.

5.7 Larissa and Jason

At the time of our interviews, Jason (27), a fourth-year doctoral student in a STEM discipline, had moved to Canada from the United States with his wife, Larissa (32), a business professional. The couple had been married the year before, having been together for eight years. As an interracial couple, their marriage had not occurred with the blessings of Larissa's family, who had instead wanted her to enter an arranged marriage. In Larissa's words: *[my parents] had been to India and wanted to do the arranged married thing. I said no last minute, I couldn't do it.* Larissa's choice to move in with Jason early in their relationship had proven difficult for her family to accept and had led to an estrangement from her parents (e.g. *my parents weren't happy that I was marrying my husband...they probably didn't talk to me for maybe a year*). The family had since reconciled and had faced a tremendous loss when one of Larissa's brothers succumbed to cancer. Given her experiences, family appeared to serve as a central component of Larissa's life and, at the time of our interviews, the couple was actively trying to get pregnant to grow their immediate family. This information provides the backdrop for the short narrative accounts told on the next page; however, a more comprehensive version of these stories can be found in Appendix Q. Much like Emma and Edward previously, Larissa and Jason's stories lacked a shared component, thus they have been labelled narratives.

5.7.1 Jason and Larissa's Narratives

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

Larissa, she is older than me, so she's been wanting to have kids for a long time. I wanted to wait until we had enough money and enough stability so that we could do it without worrying. My parents had me very young, and it caused a lot of problems. I wanted to make sure I didn't follow in that footsteps. If we had had kids three or four years ago, we would have been in a much worse financial position than now because I was new to the school. Back then, Larissa found it difficult to get a job, so we had two people living off a grad student salary, which was very tough.

Now, I'd say all our ducks are in order. This is the first time that that's happened. We aren't struggling financially, or wondering where we are going to move for grad school. This is the first time where we have a very clear path about what's about to happen. We have no uncertainty about our life. Plus, if we have children here, they can become dual citizens...dual citizenship is a good thing to have. If Larissa got pregnant today, I would want to spend some time with the child, but I would be okay with her going home to her family while I am finishing up writing my thesis. I would have to look up what stage babies start recognizing faces though. I wouldn't want to miss that stage, but I wouldn't take any time off unless something unforeseen happened.

Larissa, age 32, partner

Knowing that Jason wanted to do a PhD and pursue his education, I was like "go for it". I was a little scared of course, at first, because I didn't have any family or friends here. It was all new people. I struggled when we first got here. As a trainee spouse, it can be lonely. I think it's different for Jason as a student, because he's got his classmates...he has that interaction. I didn't even have a job at first, so it was a bit harder. So I joined a book club. It was nice to get out there and socialize and meet people [laughs]. I also joined the international spouses organization and I met a girl from the States as well. We've been friends ever since then. There are a lot of women in that group, so that's a good thing too.

Stephanie: So now that you've finally settled in, you're talking about children?

Even when we were first dating, we had talked about kids and family and values and all that stuff. After he decided to do his PhD, I asked "when should we have kids". He said "before 35". I'm okay with between 30 and 35, but I've done a lot of research and they say the longer you wait, the greater the chances of Down Syndrome and all that stuff. I wanted a healthy baby and I wanted to start younger, so I said "can we do it in your first

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

Stephanie: So the decision-making is just being driven only by yours and Larissa's desires?

I think with Larissa's family, there is implicit pressure that they don't discuss much at all. I would say they want grandkids. Larissa was born and raised in the US, but her parents were born in India. To them, being a wife and a mother, that's Larissa's job as a woman. It is highly viewed and Larissa was raised by these very traditional Eastern views.

Larissa, age 32, partner

couple years in your PhD?" I wanted to do it sooner. I don't want to be 50 and having a kid...I want to be able to keep up with them.

The women at work also have me thinking...all of my coworkers are pregnant. They are younger, like 25, so Jason and I are a bit on the older side. Seeing them in the office, I'm like "ah, I want that". It's a bit of an influence. Some of them just got married too, so they maybe felt ready and they didn't have a PhD husband or anything like that. So it's a different circumstance.

5.7.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

While the academic trainees in this study described personal and professional challenges in their interviews, it is important to remember that their partners also faced struggles. Indeed, Larissa and Jason's narratives demonstrate the sacrifices that many trainee partners make for the sake of higher education. In the case of Larissa, she had left her family, friends, and employment at home in the United States to move to Canada for Jason's doctoral work. This had led her to initially experience feelings of isolation—feelings that were exacerbated by Jason's long hours at work at the beginning of his degree. As a result, Larissa had turned to leisure outlets to help fill a perceived social void in her life (e.g. a book club, a group for the spouses of international trainees).

The early years of Jason's degree had also been a trying time for the couple financially, as they were both living off one salary during the time period it took Larissa to find employment. As a result, they had chosen, seemingly at Jason's behest, to put their family plans on hold until they were more financially stable. Jason's plan appeared to have been motivated by his experiences as the child of young parents who lacked financial resources—a situation he had no intention of repeating. While she was supportive of her husband's doctoral work and had abided by his request to wait, Larissa was clearly eager to have a child. This longing, which contained an element of urgency when discussed, may have also been tied to concerns about age-related pregnancy complications and a desire to not be an older first-time mother:

I'm okay with between 30 and 35, but I've done a lot of research and they say, the longer you wait, the greater the chances of Down syndrome and all that stuff. I wanted a healthy baby and I wanted to start younger, so I said "can we do it in your first couple years in your PhD"? I wanted to do it sooner. I don't want to be 50 and having a kid...I want to be able to keep up with them.

Interestingly, while Larissa described co-workers as being large influencers in her family planning desires (e.g. *seeing them in the office, I'm like "ah, I want that". It's a bit of an influence*), Jason suggested that Larissa was likely under *implicit* pressure from her family to become a mother, in part because it was her expected role as an Indian woman. Understanding these pressures and knowing that he was nearing the end of his doctorate, Jason felt that the

couple finally had the degree of certainty in their lives necessary to make him comfortable with the idea of a pregnancy (e.g. *this is the first time where we have a very clear path about what's about to happen. We have no uncertainty about our life*). Though only mentioned in passing, Jason also alluded to the idea that a baby born in Canada (while he was still a student) would hold dual American and Canadian citizen—a potentially useful circumstance for the child in the future for educational or work purposes:

If we have children here, they can become dual citizens. This is impossible in the States, to go the other way. But if you have a child in Canada, Canada will not make you renounce. I mean dual citizenship is a good thing to have.

Finally, Jason's suggestion that Larissa could return home to her parents for help should the couple have a child before he had finished his degree sits in contrast to several of the previous accounts in my study. Unlike Divya, who in her earlier narrative vocalized her wish to keep her immediate family unit together, Jason did not appear overly concerned about a temporary separation from his wife and future child. Larissa, on the other hand, did not mention the possibility of this type of separation, suggesting that she was likely unaware of Jason's plan.

5.8 Ella and Curtis

At 24 and 28 respectively, Ella and Curtis were the youngest couple to participate in my research. At the time of our interviews, Curtis, an American in a pseudo-arts field, was completing the first year of his doctoral studies. He had married Ella almost five years prior while both were still undergraduate students in the United States. As devout Latter-Day-Saints (who had recently joined a Mormon church in the area), Curtis and Ella had completed mission work in Asia prior to beginning their academic training and viewed family and education as the pillars around which their lives were based.

While Ella had been eager to begin having children shortly after obtaining her undergraduate degree (around the time that Curtis was completing his master's in Utah), Curtis had convinced her to wait until they were more settled in their new academic home city. On numerous occasions, Ella described the stress that this waiting had placed on her and how hard the experience had been to explain to their Mormon friends and family. Right

around the time that we first spoke, the couple had just begun the process of actively trying to become pregnant.

During our interviews, I often felt a sense that Curtis and Ella were not entirely comfortable in the interview setting, despite my best efforts to let them guide conversation and go into a level of depth with their responses that they were comfortable with. Specifically, I found that both probed into my motivations for the project (as well as my chosen qualitative research approach), as well as my general knowledge about Mormonism. In one particular dialogue with Ella, she stated the following:

I'm kind of a little bit worried that this study is going to be from a negative approach, like "oh, why are you having kids now? Like are you guys crazy or something?" I was like, "I hope she doesn't think I'm crazy because I want to have kids and I've wanted to have kids ever since I've gotten married".

In response, I had shared my own experiences as a student struggling with many of the same challenges she and Curtis were currently facing. A condensed telling of these challenges and the decisions they necessitated from the couple can be found on the next pages; however, readers are also encouraged to review this couples' full narrative(s) in Appendix R.

5.8.1 Curtis and Ella's Narrative(s)

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

The PhD kind of surprised everyone, but Ella was always totally kind with it and equally solid. We're Mormons, so it is a culture that highly prizes education and particularly believes that there is this duty to better yourself and be educated.

Stephanie: Where do children fit into the Mormon faith?

Coming from that Mormon culture, you cannot say anything that is anti-child. Unless someone says otherwise, it's assumed that children are on the table. I never really had a question about whether I wanted kids. It was kind of the de facto choice. When we were still at my master's university, Ella already wanted to start having kids.

Money was implicitly a concern in our decision-making. I mean the religious culture that we come from typically assumes that the guy should be supporting the family and the wife. Motherhood is a very big thing within that culture. So for me, I'm on the 'right' path because this is what fulfillment in life looks like for me. I'm doing what I should as a man, whereas Ella right now is kind of in that limbo phase where motherhood is waiting. I wouldn't want to do that to her and just tell her "well, wait five more years—put your life off". Starting a family...that's why you get married.

Ella, age 24, partner

It's funny because originally when we got married, Curtis wasn't sure about going into academics. He came to a crossroads and he was like, "oh I don't know what I should do. What should I do?" And I was like "go for the PhD!!" So right now Curtis will stay up really late working on homework or whatever [laughs]. I don't really see him much because I'm just like, "okay, better leave him alone...don't be distracting him". So I work on my hobbies. I like to read a lot and I'm trying to stay fit even though it's winter time and that's kind of a pain [laughs].

Stephanie: So when did discussion about children start for you both?

I had gone through periods of time where I was like, "oh I want to be a mom...a teacher...a mom...an architect...a mom". It was always "I want to be a mom". I got married when I was 19. I know at that point I was a little bit too young and I was like, "oh, we'll wait a couple of years at least to have kids" because I was a student. Now, I don't really want to wait. I know my biological clock is going off.

Families are important in the Mormon faith. We—families can be together forever and bringing people into the world is always a good thing. So when you have a culture that's so family-oriented, even people who aren't trying to put pressure on may ask “hey now, kids?” They may not try to apply pressure, but people would feel it as pressure.

I don't think a man would get those questions quite as much. I think maybe Ella feels like she's being pressured. I don't.

Stephanie: Do you feel any pressure, one way or the other, from your department?

My current graduate coordinator did her PhD here and had her first child while she was doing her PhD. My supervisor is also pregnant now, so I definitely can't see getting advice from them to not to have children. I probably wouldn't be here at the university if that was the case. I investigated before I decided to enrol and explicitly asked the students if any of the guys had families.

My mom's third husband is a member of the church too. He's like, “oh we really want kids”. I'm like “shut up. I don't care about your wants”. I know that sounds really crass, but I just get really frustrated. I know in terms of being married and having kids, we're late on that. Me at twenty-four [laughs] ... just a little.

Stephanie: Have you thought at all about how you and Curtis might manage your lives with a child?

I'm not entirely sure how things work with the schooling, but I'm sure Curtis could actually work it out with his professors and say, “okay my wife's due at this time. Can I go ahead and work on some of the homework beforehand?” Curtis really likes that he can be so flexible with hours and be there for our family.

5.8.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

The undercurrent of Curtis and Ella's narrative(s) dealt specifically with religion and the networks of support necessary for success among trainee parents and their partners. As individuals who practiced the Mormon faith and attended a master's institution affiliated with the Mormon Church, Curtis and Ella were largely accustomed to being surrounded by an expansive network of like-minded individuals. Within these faith-related communities, pronatalist ideology was unquestioned, spending quality time with one's family was expected, educational pursuits were celebrated, and couples were, arguably, accustomed to uprooting to pursue the work involved with one's calling. As a result, trainee parenthood was not necessarily something that was frowned upon within Mormon academic institutions, but was instead acknowledged as a likely and manageable life event for couples:

Family was really important in my master's university because it is a church university. I don't know if professors would be fired per se, but it would not bode well for a professor to not have their family life in order. The institution wants you to do really well at the research, but they expect your family life to also be a priority. A lot of universities would say "great, if that's what you want—be productive in your research, but you may have these family problems. That's not our issue". My master's university would take issue with that, so definitely a different culture.

Consequently, when Curtis had initially decided to pursue a doctorate at the study site (a secular institution), he had made sure to speak to other graduate students about the parenthood-related culture within the department and the ways they went about managing their time:

For singles, if we have a research paper due, 80 percent of that time is 'write it' and 15 percent is Facebook. Whereas marrieds, well, if they have kids and it's like, "well I have to drop them off at school. I have to do this and that". It's like "okay, well I have from 3 to 5 p.m. to work on the paper" then 3 to 5 p.m. is spent working on the paper.

Additionally, Curtis perceived female mentors within his program (e.g. his supervisor and graduate coordinator) as being supportive of him pursuing parenthood, as both women had been or were pregnant themselves.

As an academic trainee partner who was not enrolled in studies herself, Ella was more isolated than her husband with regard to a support network. While she had enjoyed a rich

social life with the partners of other trainees during Curtis' master's work, she had yet to form these types of attachments as a newcomer in Canada. As Curtis explained:

At least for your core classes [during my master's], you had the same people in every class. So for each semester you had a group of five people for every class. Having that network was nice and then they had girlfriends, so Ella also had somebody that was going through the same thing. She doesn't really have that support here yet.

Curtis' consuming work schedule—often at odd hours of the night—also meant that Ella was somewhat isolated from the support of her husband, potentially contributing to the general sense of loneliness that came through in her narrative. As a result, she frequently immersed herself in leisure outlets, such as reading or exercise, likely to help keep her mind and/or body occupied. Ella was also eager to make friends in the area with whom to socialize. Indeed, the potential social support that such individuals could provide was also viewed, primarily by Curtis, as a necessity before the couple could start a family:

Curtis was like, "well, I think you should wait a little while to get pregnant because you don't have any friends here and you'll want some support right?" And I was like, "okay, fine. I can wait longer [laughs]. He was right about that. I did need to have friends and support and build that up. (Ella)

Curtis' rationale, by all appearances, was that he wanted to ensure that his wife would have the encouragement and help necessary to manage the day-to-day responsibilities associated with being a primary caregiver to a child, particularly because they did not have family living locally—a common issue for many international trainees. As a result, Ella was making attempts to meet new people (e.g. 'friend-stalking' individuals who passed by her window in graduate student housing), hoping that her efforts would earn her the beginnings of a new social network (e.g. *when I got here I was literally watching my neighbours to make sure, if somebody was coming outside, I'd be like, "hey, how it's going? I need a friend"*). This type of behaviour conveyed the intensity of Ella's desire to become a mother—a longing she described as her being driven by her *biological clock*, but could equally be attributable to social influences.

Curtis' and Ella's shared narrative conveys their experience of growing up in a faith where having children is a socially expected part of life. Consequently, well-meaning or curious questioning from others had the potential to be perceived as subtle pressure—

particularly by women. Much like Divya and Anish described previously in their South Asian, Catholic community, Ella felt that others in her faith viewed her and Curtis as being *behind* with regard to children. Curtis seemed sympathetic to the idea that Ella had yet to fulfill her purpose in life—at least within the eyes of their church—and acknowledged that, as a man, he was likely not under the same social scrutiny surrounding family as his wife.

5.9 Penelope and Louis

Penelope and Louis, both 27, had been married for approximately two years prior to participating in my study. Penelope had grown up in an economically-challenged Caucasian family in a small Ontario city. Louis, conversely, had grown up with his grandparents in China until the age of 9, when he immigrated to Canada to join his mother and stepfather who were both professors at a local university. As a result, he had grown up with a certain degree of economic privilege and a deep respect for educational pursuits. The couple had originally met at a charity event during the undergraduate degree and had opted to pursue their social science master's degrees together in the same department. They had also both travelled to China for a semester to complete master's-related fieldwork. At the time of our interviews, Penelope was about six months into her doctoral studies, while Louis was completing the final months of teacher's college at an institution a little over an hour away. They lived together in a small apartment close to Louis' campus and subsisted primarily off of Penelope's \$22,000/year doctoral stipend. As she only needed to be on campus for classes and teaching assistant work, Penelope commuted by bus to her campus three days a week.

Much like a previous participant, Vivian, Penelope had strong sentiments about the role gender played in her academic experience. In her words:

In my doctoral cohort, there's two men and the rest are women, which makes for an interesting dynamic because the majority of the professors are male. I find I have big issues with the way women in academia are treated and need to behave and the biggest is vulnerability. People always tell us that vulnerability can be powerful because you can learn from negative experiences. But when you walk into a meeting with a bunch of men and you're the vulnerable person—it's really difficult to have the confidence to excel in that situation. And so now I have a comps committee that has four men on it and I have to walk into that room and take command. I can't act vulnerable. So I end up trying to be exceptionally aggressive, but then it makes them forget that I am a

vulnerable person...the student. So it creates a bit of a feedback loop where they end up being a little bit more aggressive than they should be and we start talking over each other. It's this fight for power that I think men often get into that women aren't used to. So I find that that's difficult...to push your vulnerability down all the time, instead of just sort of embracing the fact that you might cry. I feel like I have to run away afterwards just to take a breath because I don't want them to see that it has exhausted me.

I also think the expectations on women are different in the academy. We're expected to be able to handle the fact that in one particular week we're on our period...we have eight things due...our husband is being a jackass...that we're trying to get pregnant...that somebody got sick...that our cat shat all over our favourite rug. Those are things that might be important to us as women that aren't necessarily as important to men. And then if you talk to a man about it they might say "well those are just general life stresses" [interviewer smiles]. I've never been that person to go and talk about my life stresses and say why it will impact my work. Instead I just try and push through and I think that's expected of a lot of stronger women.

As Penelope and Louis lived a reasonable distance away from the university, all of their interviews took place via Skype. As both possessed a background in qualitative research, they appeared extremely comfortable with the personal disclosures that often accompany research interviews. These have been condensed for display in the narrative(s) on the following page, but can be read in a more comprehensive format in Appendix S.

Penelope and Louis, however, were somewhat unique among the participants in that they were the only couple that appeared to be in decidedly different headspaces with regard to their family-planning decision making (i.e. Penelope wanted to pursue a family while Louis expressed a degree of trepidation, primarily centered on the uncertainty of his job prospects post-graduation). As Louis was still supporting his wife's decision to cease using birth control, I felt that this situation did not pose an ethical issue for this couple's participation in the study.

5.9.1 Penelope and Louis' Narrative(s)

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

One of the main reasons why we were attracted to each other was because we both valued education and knowledge and were both going to university. How we grew up, the both of us, the way that education was placed as an identifier of who we were and then how we made each other be better at that, that's important.

Research...learning...It's also what I love. When I try and think about what I could do to relax—I have a really hard time figuring out what that would be because my work is what I enjoy. Like this weekend, for example, Louis and I plan to do an apocalypse-themed movie weekend, so the whole time I'm going to have to be on about the themes of peak oil or societal collapse or whatever that relates to my work. I end up strategically picking things that we do together that sort of feed into my work/life.

I really have a lot of respect for anyone who is undertaking PhD studies. I think my mother always kind of assumed [laughs] that I would go on and do a PhD because she did her PhD. I've always really liked those kinds of intellectual pursuits and talking about intellectual things, but sometimes deciding not to do a PhD has started to make me have a little bit of an inferiority complex. I have started to feel like I'm not keeping up as much as I was before.

Stephanie: Would you say your desire for a child a fairly new one in your lives?

Well it's interesting because until about three years ago, I had planned to live my life child-free. Louis and I had agreed upon that...that we were both more interested in travel. We were also concerned about the future; being an environmentalist, you really feel like the world is on your shoulders. So we were concerned about bringing a child into the future. This thinking also corresponded with us not having good communication

I've always kind of thought it would be nice to have a kid. Then I started to read more and sort of think about what is ethical to do and those kinds of things and I started to think, maybe having a kid wasn't the best thing...the most responsible thing to do. I kind of compromised by saying to myself, "well, I'll adopt a kid". That way it's the ethical

skills and not having a really supportive relationship with each other. So once we worked through some of that and created this very loving and supportive relationship, it switched. I started to feel like this was the person I wanted to be healthy for and who I wanted to be with for my whole life and who I wanted to have a child with.

thing to do and I'll be able to raise a child. But then I found out how expensive that it is and that kind of [smiles] threw a wrench into the whole thing.

I think the whole baby concept really got solidified sometime after we got married when we started to plan our immediate future together. That's when Penelope really started to push, but I've always felt like I could go either way. Simultaneously I think that it would both nice to have the freedom and to not have the financial burden of a child but, I also think it would be great to have another focus around which we could plan our lives together.

Stephanie: Have you had any outside influences impacting your thinking at all?

It was really encouraging for me to see this one girl in my program—she had a baby the first week we started our PhDs. She was pregnant on our orientation day and then the very first day of class (four days later), she walked in with a baby strapped to her chest. And I was like, “go home, go home” [laughs]. “Here, I'll take notes for you, go home” [laughs]. But she was very much just like, “I'm okay” and she was and she is. She wanted to learn and she really wanted people to know who she was and to build that community. Her husband is home to take care of the kid so she can just go out and make those connections that she needs as an adult. My supervisor also has a kid and he's like “if you ever need some help, talk to me about it”.

External pressures...NOOOOO, not from my parents or my family. Actually my mother is exerting pressure in the opposite direction. She thinks that we should be financially secure before trying to have a baby.

I think there is some pressure on Penelope's end, for sure. Her mother really wants a grandchild. Her sister is also very traditional in those kinds of things, so she also really wants a baby and may be pressuring Penelope. Penelope grew up in a small town in Ontario so a lot of her childhood friends are already married with kids, sometimes multiple kids, so that might also create pressure. By comparison, none of our

mutual close friends right now have a kid or are planning to have a kid. So I am not feeling pressure from my friends.

5.9.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

Penelope and Louis' narrative(s) demonstrate the somewhat complicated ways that a couple's family planning and indeed, their relationship, can be impacted and informed by academic training. As an environmentally conscious couple who enjoyed an independent lifestyle, Penelope and Louis had opted early in their relationship to actively not pursue parenthood. This thinking appears very much in line with the priorities and identities that the couple associated with their studies (i.e. placing a high value on education; a common background in environmental research), and is a predominant element in their individual and shared narrative(s). Over time, however, the couple's relationship had changed and Penelope had altered her position regarding motherhood in the context of her life. Louis, however, remained largely undecided about children and vocalized his concerns about the subject during several moments in our interviews together.

Given my positioning as a graduate student and as a woman with a desire to become a mother, I feel it is important to acknowledge the different ways I likely interacted with Penelope and Louis in the interview setting. The identity factors that Penelope and I shared (e.g. 'woman', 'doctoral student', 'individual keenly interested in pursuing parenthood'), for example, may have contributed to her feeling as though I would be understanding or even empathetic with regard to her thoughts and experiences. Conversely, Louis, as a man and trainee partner, may have felt decidedly less comfortable sharing his trepidations related to parenthood with me in our interviews—perhaps anticipating that I might lack an understanding about his concerns related to children. As a result, it could be argued that he may have been less forthcoming with the telling of his story than Penelope, or may have downplayed his concerns when talking to me.

Like most of the couples who participated in my research, Penelope and Louis had intentionally decided to wait until after they had married before trying to start a family—arguably evidence of a general adherence to traditional 'family values' or religious teachings. In the words of Louis

I have never really put a lot of great significance in things like marriage, but I understand that a lot of people do and [Penelope] does...especially her family. Her dad is a United Church minister, so she's kind of grown up thinking that marriage is very important. I think

a part of it is that once you get married, it seems like the natural next step would be to have a kid.

In addition to her relationship, Penelope also expressed a tremendous amount of passion for her doctoral work in the area of sustainability in our interviews together. Interestingly, she had found ways to incorporate her research topic into her leisure choices (e.g. watching films and consuming pleasure reads on certain topic areas and discussing them with her husband and friends). As a result, her mind—both at the university and at home—was often focused on her research, making it difficult for her to separate the work and leisure spheres of her time. This constant immersion in academic thinking exercises also appeared to be creating a divide between herself and Louis, the latter of whom felt as though he was no longer *keeping up* intellectually with his wife. In particular, Penelope felt that her academic research was changing her plans about what she wanted out of life, both for herself and her family. For example, as her research would necessitate her conducting fieldwork on farmland in the coming years, Penelope wanted to share this socially enriching experience with a future baby by bringing the child along to *see what people are doing and to play in some dirt*. As Penelope put it: *I find that my research is definitely shaping how I want my child to experience the world*. Additionally, Penelope wanted to take advantage of the flexibility afforded by her degree to have a child (e.g. *I don't have to go to school if I don't want to most of the time. If something comes up I can call and say, "sorry, something came up"*)—a desire that was causing the couples' family planning timeline to perhaps move faster than Louis may have been comfortable with:

Louis wanted to wait until he had a job, a full-time, permanent whatever. I said, "sweetie, you're going to be a teacher. You may not have a job for five years and we're not going to wait that long. I don't want to have my first kid when I'm well into my 30s". (Penelope)

While her intellectual strides appeared to have a positive impact on Penelope, there was also a gender-related element to her new academic world that caused her anxiety. Despite coming from a graduate student cohort that was predominately female, Penelope felt that the largely male-dominated faculty in her department was not overly receptive to the potential needs of female academic trainees. Specifically, she felt a need to disguise her emotions related to the management of her work and home life from her all-male dissertation committee (through an aggressive communication style) in order to distract from her perceived vulnerability as a trainee. While some might perceive such an environment as being intimidating for individuals wanting to

challenge the status quo with regard to schooling and family, Penelope had taken the stance that she wanted to be in control of her own decision-making (e.g. *I need to examine where I'm at and decide if it's a good thing and not be pushed along lines that people or society have for me*). Additionally, she had sought out role models (e.g. her supervisor, a friend who had given birth in the first week of her own PhD) who would support her desire to become a parent and share some of their own work/life management strategies.

As the only child of two professors—one of whom was his step-father—Louis' personal decision-making related to family may have been indirectly impacted by the academy. Having spent his early years in China waiting for his mother to complete her doctorate in Canada and find secure academic employment, Louis understood all too well the ways academic training could impact one's ability and willingness to be a present and financially stable parent:

I wouldn't make the same kind of mistakes that my parents made with me [smiles]. I'm sure that's one of the primary [smiles] reasons why a lot of people have kids...because they think they can do better. So Penelope and I, we've talked a lot and we've analysed all these kind of different things that our parents didn't do or did do and how we could avoid those same problems, make improvements, or be better parents.

Perhaps wanting to avoid some of the monetary issues his mother had encountered as a young academic, Louis appeared extremely wary about having a child—particularly before he had found stable employment. In his words:

I've also got to say [sighs], finances worry me and Penelope and I have talked about this. Her opinion is that we're always going to have money problems and we're never going to be 100 percent ready. So we should just go for it and believe that things will have a way of working themselves out. I'm not quite as optimistic about that [laughs].

This statement suggests that Louis, much like several of the male participants have described previously, may have had a desire to act as a breadwinner for his family—particularly while his wife was finishing her training. As a result, he seemed reluctant to take on more financial responsibility (i.e. a baby) than he felt he could readily handle.

5.10 Scarlett and Eli

At 26 and 27 respectively, Scarlett and Eli were among the youngest couples interviewed for this project. Both were Caucasian and had lived their entire lives within the province of

Ontario. At the time of our first meeting, they had been married for just over two years, though they had been romantically linked since the very end of high school. At the time that we spoke, Scarlett was a third-year doctoral student in a STEM field who had transferred from a master's to a PhD program. As all of her postsecondary education (i.e. undergraduate and doctoral training) had been completed at the same institution, she had chosen, based on the advice of her doctoral supervisor, to spend a semester abroad in Europe studying new science techniques. Unable to join her due to his own career commitments as an administrator in a local business, Eli had stayed behind in Canada. At the time that they participated in my study, Scarlett was at the end of the second trimester of her planned first pregnancy.

Despite being a continent away when my recruitment email was sent, Scarlett responded within twenty minutes to convey her interest in participating. Overall, she expressed a desire to be seen and heard as a pregnant academic trainee—a status she viewed as being uncommon in her area of study: *I'm like as rare as a unicorn or something*. The interviews that included Scarlett took place via Skype, including the couple's interview which took place with Eli and myself in the same room in a building on the study site. Due to technical issues, I could not always see Scarlett's face, but she was quick and on topic with her responses and laughed frequently. Eli shared his wife's attention to detail, though he took a more stoic and contemplative approach to his answers in our in-person interview (i.e. he often paused to think before speaking; was careful with his word choices and frequently corrected himself if he felt he had expressed something inaccurately). Some of these elements appear in the condensed narrative(s) on the next page; however, readers should see Appendix T for a more extensive account of Scarlett and Eli's stories.

5.10.1 Scarlett and Eli's Narrative(s)

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Eli's been an *incredibly important* part of my trainee experience—a huge support really, particularly with our baby on the way. *He'll bring me dinners at the office if I need them and he knows that if something is coming up and we won't be seeing as much of each other that I'll be more stressed out. He's really supportive* about the whole process [smiles]. I really try to convey to him that he's a *priority. I try not to spend much longer than 9 to 5 at the actual office* so I can *at least get home at a reasonable hour and we can have some free time together. It is important to us that we have that time.*

Eli, age 27, partner

I love my wife, which is probably why I worry about her so much—particularly about how much grad work she commits herself to. *Her supervisor has deadlines and pushes a lot, but doesn't always leave her enough time to get the work done and it stresses her out. Part of me wonders if it's because she's the first female groomed in her professor's lab and she doesn't want to be the one that gives him a negative impression of women in [STEM] and pregnancy.* I'm concerned that her commitment might be *negatively impacting her personal time and worry that all this work will cause her to burn out, because she's totally the type that does.* I'm just trying to *support her.*

Stephanie: So given Scarlett's schedule, was your pregnancy a surprise or something that you planned?

Our *baby was planned* [Scarlett laughs, Eli smiles]. But deciding to get pregnant *wasn't just a one day kind of thing. It was a discussion that had been going on between us for a long time. I think we just felt we were ready for a baby now. We discussed it and, you know, kind of aired out the idea. It's something we have always wanted, or wanted for a very, very long time, and it finally became, I guess, reasonable in our relationship. You get an education...you get married...you work on that marriage until you feel the timing is right and then, it's just the next progression.*

I'd also add that *I've gotten most of my coursework out of the way which does make my time more flexible. I have defined my research at this point, so I guess just mentally*

I've done a lot of thinking about why I want a child, and I think it boils down to...*a personal longing. I want to see the world through somebody else's eyes. To me, the*

there are less variables in that part of my life, so maybe I was ready to introduce some craziness in another part [smiles]. It was particularly important to me to have my children before I turned 30, in part because my little brother has Down Syndrome and he was born when my mom was in her 30s. So I've kind of got a bit of a deadline on myself. It's not a hard deadline, it's just something in the back of my head that says like "if you're ready enough now..." I actually talked about children with my mom when I was making the decision about if I wanted to do a PhD, so she knew that Eli and I were interested in having a family at a younger age.

world has become a rather jaded and sometimes—a horrifying place—and I really want to see the world as good and rejuvenated...like a re-genesis almost. But that sounds selfish in a way. A child is just something I believe will help fulfill my desire to nurture and look after somebody on top of, you know, my wife. Our finances were also an important consideration. You want to make sure you could look after and feed your family if, you know, it grows. I'm still fairly new at work, but I often think – "I need to keep this job... I need to move forward... I need to get a promotion so I can make more money so I can do more things".

Communicating with each other has always been important in our relationship and it's really going to be important once the baby arrives. We think it will help mitigate the stress from low sleep and how much more difficult it will be to go about the daily routine. We think communicating and being on the same page will really help conquer new obstacles. We can each kind of take care of ourselves, but the baby can't take care of itself [Scarlett chuckles]. We need to make sure that we are taking care of it properly and of each other too. Family is the priority for us.

Our families also aren't too far away, less than an hour, so there's going to be people around [laughing]. That was important to us too when we were making this decision to get pregnant. We aren't isolated. We have a strong network of our family and our church community. We also already have our name on the shortlist for the daycare at the university.

I can see myself being a lot more defensive of my time at home and a lot of more strict about the whole 9 to 5 sort of thing after I come back from leave. It helps that there are

I want to be an involved dad... to build the bond with my child. So if we can afford it, I want to take a few months of parental leave to be at home. Feeding the baby, helping

some young fathers in my lab and some of them have already drawn these lines and said, “no I can't have meetings on Wednesdays because my daughter has swimming lessons”. I'm like, EXCELLENT!

out with diapers...those are all the things I think I'm looking forward to because I think that's part of the experience of fatherhood

5.10.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

The final three couple's narratives presented in this chapter represent a slightly different vantage point than those viewed earlier, in large part because these couples were already pregnant at the time of our interviews together. As a result, the participants were able to speak in more concrete terms about their specific motivators related to family. However, I feel it is vital to convey that I did not view these pregnant couple stories as being any more or less 'real' than any others.

The first of these narratives (Scarlett and Eli) focused specific attention on the prioritization of family within couples who are committed to academic training. As the first female ever to work in her research group, Scarlett could very well be considered a minority (e.g. *I am the first girl in my research group, ever. E-V-E-R! But it's because I'm in [a male dominated STEM specialty] and it's just not common for women to join*). Although she did not necessarily feel that her gender impacted her graduate training experience (e.g. *I actually find it kind of funny that people think that my training is going to be a new experience because I'm a girl, but it's just the same experience*), she acknowledged that her status as a woman may have impacted how individuals in her department viewed her decision-making surrounding family (presumably, that she would prioritize family over her research). As a result, she put intense pressure on herself to demonstrate to others her commitment and ability to *manage it all*. As her partner, Eli appeared to deeply admire his wife's passion for her work, but worried that Scarlett's devotion might impact her leisure time and lead to *burn out*. Now that Scarlett was pregnant, Eli felt that her academic commitment had become even more important and emotionally complex, as she wanted to ensure that her supervisor did not have a *negative impression of women in [STEM] and pregnancy*. Overall, the couple's shared narrative gave the impression that they viewed their relationship and their ability to communicate with one another as priorities and valuable resources for managing parenthood.

Both Scarlett and Eli described parenthood as being an endeavour that they both wanted; however, the process of getting pregnant proved to be much more challenging than the couple had anticipated. While Eli had been uncomfortable discussing the subject with me (e.g. *that's a VERY personal question! I have no problems answering it, but I think I would rather leave that*

question for my wife to answer), Scarlett shared that they had had difficulty conceiving while she was under stress (e.g. from her comprehensive exams, tight deadlines for TAs or projects):

For me, [pregnancy] didn't happen right away and Eli and I both knew because we were paying attention to things. When I was under a lot of stress, I wasn't able to get pregnant. Like getting ready for my comps, for instance, was NOT a good time [laughs].

While this experience was disappointing for the couple, it was not something that was entirely unexpected, as Scarlett was aware that professors in her department had experienced infertility issues related to their stressful academic roles. The comprehensive exam process had proven to be one such time for the couple, and they were not able to conceive until this milestone was completed. Once she had surmounted this hurdle, Scarlett described having more flexibility in her working schedule—time that made the soon-to-be responsibilities of parenthood feel more manageable.

Unfortunately, Scarlett had experienced a difficult first trimester of her pregnancy (i.e. frequent bouts of severe nausea) that had impacted her ability to work on her research and triggered feelings of guilt regarding her productivity. These bumps in her academy journey appeared manageable however, in part because she had support at home from Eli. When she was stuck on campus completing research or needed to work all night to make a work deadline, he would bring her meals or would make sure that a pot of coffee was always brewing in the kitchen. These acts, though small, assisted Scarlett during some of the more stressful periods of her training, allowing her to feel less alone in the process.

Scarlett and Eli appeared comfortable with the quiet existence they had built together that revolved around family and seemed ready for what they felt was the next logical *progression* in their lives together (i.e. a child). Indeed, their desire to prioritize family may have been partially shaped by Scarlett's role as a sibling of a child with special needs—an experience which also influenced her own desire to start a family at a younger age. Eli's specific desires surrounding parenthood included *a personal longing, wanting to nurture and look after somebody*, and a desire to view the world through the less *jaded* eyes of a child. He also felt that a baby would allow him to *build another chapter* in life that logically followed the events that had come before. Since he was now going to be a father, Eli felt that it was important for him to put his

family first and ensure that he was doing all he could to be an effective provider for both his wife and child.

Before pursuing parenthood, Scarlett had sought out a variety of role models and mentors to assist with her future management of academic training and parenthood. In addition to an on-campus support group for female students in STEM fields, Scarlett had also found a female mentor within her own department who was able to share her own experience of having a child during her doctoral training:

So I have this mentor for my academic career in my department. When I was thinking about doing this PhD, I asked the specific question “is it possible to have a family AND do a PhD?” I was actually at the point where, if it wasn't possible, I wasn't interested in the PhD. It was really helpful to hear that my mentor went through the exact same thing, and her and her husband decided to have their first while they were both in their PhD. She's been a great source of information and support, and just wonderful for me.

A different female source within Scarlett's department had also put her in touch with other doctoral students who had families, contributing to her feeling as though her department—or at least certain women within it—were supportive of graduate student families. While Eli did not readily discuss seeking out such supports in his professional or personal life, he did describe feeling as though Scarlett's department was *inclusive* of partners and children (e.g. *work barbeques, they are something that she's always invited me out to. Her professor brings his kids and some of the other people have young kids so they bring them and it's always inclusive*).

Finally, Scarlett and Eli's shared narrative demonstrated that they had a strong network of supports in place to assist with their transition to parenthood. Indeed, the existence of these supports had likely been influential in their decision to have a child. The couples' supports included family and friends who lived nearby and were willing to assist with childcare, support from their church, university and employment resources (i.e. daycare and parental bursary leave at the university; parental leave through Eli's work), and Scarlett's co-workers (e.g. *it helps that there are some young fathers in my lab and some of them have already drawn these lines and said, “no I can't have meetings on Wednesdays because my daughter has swimming lessons”*). Indeed, it would appear that Scarlett's male colleague in particular had helped to establish a culture that was more acknowledging of trainee responsibilities outside the academy; however,

Scarlett had yet to see whether she would be extended this same acceptance as a female trainee mother.

5.11 Zhara and Yaser

Zhara and Yaser, at 29 and 31 years respectively, were the only pregnant international trainee couple who participated in my study. At the time of our interviews, Yaser had just defended his STEM-oriented doctoral thesis and had begun a postdoctoral position under the supervision of another professor in his department. Zhara also worked for this same professor as a research assistant and, at the time that we spoke, was approximately seven months into her planned first pregnancy.

Both from Iran, the couple had met and married shortly after Yaser's first year of doctoral studies four years prior. Upon moving to Canada, Zhara had also begun doctoral studies at the same institution and in the same department as her husband. Whilst Yaser had enjoyed his experience of a doctoral supervisor who upheld a strict 'no email' policy outside regular working hours, Zhara had chosen to work for a supervisor who placed extensive time demands on her graduate students. As a result, Zhara felt that her management of work and family life had been eroded during her doctoral studies, much to her dismay. To resolve this undesired working situation, Zhara had chosen to convert from a PhD to a master's degree at the end of her third year. She had defended her degree approximately one month into her pregnancy, though she was unaware that she was pregnant at the time.

Both Zhara and Yaser appeared rather soft-spoken when we first met and often requested clarification from me when they felt they did not fully understand a question. This was helpful to me as a researcher and likely allowed for the construction of narratives that were more in keeping with the couple's experiences. While the condensed version of their story(ies) can be found on the next page, an extended version can be found in Appendix U.

5.11.1 Zhara and Yaser's Narrative(s)

Yaser, age 31, first year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

I feel you should divide your time to be with your family. You need not to sacrifice one—family or work—for the other one. I actually once heard a story about one STEM supervisor at another institution and he wanted to hire a female student. He told her that she should promise that she would never be pregnant. I was shocked by this. I don't think that my current department would look differently if someone was pregnant, I mean in terms of commitment. I have a friend, he's a male and his baby was born last summer. He took his paternity leave and the department was totally okay. I don't think that they had any problem with that.

Stephanie: If your department is really supportive, is there a reason you and Zhara didn't have children before now?

When I started my PhD, I didn't know what the future would be. I didn't know what my supervisor would expect me to do in terms of time or pressure. Zhara, she was also a STEM student who needed to be in the lab and I think that those were good reasons not to have children. When Zhara finished her studies, I knew that I would be finished in a few months, so then there was no other excuse.

Zhara, age 28, partner, master's graduate, STEM discipline

My old PhD supervisor expected that something gets finished before we leave for the day. So I actually worked into the night. It was really impossible to manage both life and studies. I didn't like it because I couldn't take enough time for my family. It was because of my supervisor's expectations and not because I couldn't manage a master's or PhD. In that situation, I decided to finish just my master's and that's when we stopped taking precautions to prevent pregnancy.

Stephanie: Did any of the trainees in that lab have children at the time?

There were some men, but not women.

Stephanie: Do you know if any of the men were primary or co-caregivers?

I know that they weren't [laughs]. Actually, what I see now is that men don't pay attention generally to their family that much when they are grad students...they just pay attention to their studies. I think it's more important for women to pay attention to their husbands and children. I think it's their primary role. I think this thinking is because of maybe culture. In STEM, many students' home countries are like my country.

Maybe there's something ridiculous that also had some small impact on our decision. We're permanent residents, we're not citizens. Now assume that we go back to Iran, decide to have a baby and then we decide to come to Canada again to work. So we might not have any problem to come here, but that baby is not a permanent resident and he or she has to apply for a visa and it's got to process. You have no idea how hard it is. So it's good for the baby to be born here. We know some people that want to go back to their country, but they may stay here for one year after graduation to have a baby here and then go.

Stephanie: Once the baby arrives, have you thought at all about how you both might manage your work and home responsibilities?

The priority is family, then work, then education. Family... both children and mother and father. If education interferes with work or family, we will quit the education. It was like this for our parents in our culture.

You cannot stay and spend the night in the university saying "oh I have a deadline, you stay alone" and your wife takes care of the baby [laughs]. I feel that would affect my work, as my work affects my family. I mean maybe I can work a few hours over the weekend, but if I have to spend two days of the weekend, I would say no. I wouldn't do that postdoc project.

Stephanie: Do you want to be an involved dad? Changing diapers, helping with feedings, those sorts of things?

My plan is to stay at home for at least two years and then maybe for other children. I will be the primary caregiver and I just need some help. So that's fine if Yaser wants to be helping. I think we have our weekends, but the other days—Yaser won't be free. My mother will come too, for four months. I think it will be very difficult because we are alone here. In my home country when someone wants to study or work, grandparents do a lot.

Well, I think I have to [laughs]. I would escape if I could. The good thing here is that Zhara's mom is coming here to help her and that will be a good thing. I expect that I will not do anything during that period. But after that yeah, I will be involved.

I think that father and mother, they're two complementing parts. So the mother will think about some factors. The father will think about some other factors, right? So if we were to move or go looking for some other apartment, I'll do that. I've heard that a dad should be like this and I think that this is true, so I'll do that.

5.11.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

As a postdoctoral trainee and former PhD student turned research assistant, Zhara and Yaser's narrative(s) highlight traditional gender roles within the family, as well as the unique challenges faced by STEM and/or international trainee families. As a reminder, unlike many trainees coming from the social sciences and humanities, STEM trainees are typically required to be in the laboratory to complete their work. Consequently, these trainees often do not have the same degree of flexibility in their working environments as those in social science and humanities fields, potentially adding an extra dimension of complexity to their work/family life management.

Coming from a STEM discipline that was male dominated, Zhara described a traditionally androcentric departmental culture that encouraged trainees to prioritize their graduate work over their family life. This reality, combined with a doctoral supervisor who had little regard for her students' home lives, had largely contributed to Zhara's decision to leave her PhD (though she continued to work in a less demanding lab within the same department). Indeed, the notion that her husband and future children would likely need to be lower priorities in her life had not sat well with Zhara, who held traditional values about female roles within the family (e.g. she believed that women should take on the larger share of childcare work within families; believed that women should be the ones to *take care of children when they are sick*). It should be pointed out, however, that Zhara alluded to a certain degree of frustration with regard to her perception that male trainee parents in her department devoted all of their time to their studies—frequently to their exclusion of their family responsibilities.

Yaser, who was a trainee in the same STEM department as Zhara's previous doctoral supervisor, appeared to have a slightly different perspective on the department's approach to trainee parents. While he did acknowledge that there were some institutions and/or programs that might question a trainee's commitment to their research if they were to decide to start a family (e.g. his story of a female student whose supervisor made her promise not to have children while enrolled in her studies), he described feeling as though his current department was supportive of trainee parenthood and the option of taking a parental leave (e.g. *I have a*

friend, he's a male and his baby was born last summer. He took his paternity leave and the department was totally okay. I don't think that they had any problem with that). While the divergence of Yaser and Zhara's experiences could be attributed to differing supervisor attitudes within the same department, it could be argued that the gender of the trainee parent (or even the supervisor) may have also impacted attitudes on the subject.

Like many of the other participants in my research, apparent pronatalist ideology was referenced to by the couple with regard to their family-planning. Interestingly, it was male partner Yaser who described the concept of needing to have an *excuse* as to why he and Zhara had not yet had a child (i.e. he was completing his PhD). Indeed, the fact that the couple even needed an 'excuse' at all related to this choice implies that children were socially and/or culturally expected of the couple at some point during their marriage (Yaser: *I mean in our culture back home in Iran, it's more or less the same as here. When two young people get married, after a few years they decide to have a baby*). Additionally, the couple's commitment to prioritizing family (conveyed in their shared narrative) also supports their conscious/subconscious adoption of pronatalist ways of thinking. It is important, however, to note that Zhara and Yaser's parents had not largely pushed this agenda on the couple—indeed, they seemed rather shocked by the couple's pregnancy announcement:

Generally in our culture, especially grandmothers and grandfathers, they want their child to have kids as soon as possible. But for my parents and Yaser's parents, they didn't push. Actually I think that my parents didn't ask us because of my studies, but some parents they don't care [laughs]. (Zhara)

Our families were surprised [laughs]. We were talking to them on Skype so we could see their faces and we expected them to be happy, you know, shouting or congratulating us. At the time, both our families—her parents and my parents—they just said, "what?" Then for a few seconds there was just quiet and we tried to explain, "okay yeah, there is going to be a baby". And they say, "oh yeah? Okay, okay, congratulations". (Yaser)

Citizenship also appeared to have a bearing on the couple's decision to have a child and was highlighted in their shared narrative. As both partners described wanting their child to be born in Canada to make permanent immigration a more straightforward possibility in the future, they had intentionally made to decision to have a child before Yaser had finished his

postdoctoral training. This strategic planning related to a trainee child's birth country was also reported earlier in Jason's narrative.

As Zhara intended to quit her job to stay at home with their child after its birth, Yaser felt that he would likely play more of a supportive (rather than a primary) role in childcare. He did, however, discuss the ways that he intended to alter his laboratory schedule to work better for his family life (e.g. not working too many late nights; limiting time spent on work on the weekends). Also, like several of the international trainee couples in my study (i.e. Divya and Anish; Ella and Curtis), the couple planned to have Zhara's mother come abroad to assist with childcare, suggesting that they did not want to manage this life change without outside support. This thinking may have been motivated by Zhara's understanding as a former STEM trainee that Yaser's day-to-day laboratory schedule might not be overly flexible (e.g. *I will be the primary caregiver and I just need some help. So that's fine if Yaser wants to be helping. I think we have our weekends, but the other days—Yaser won't be free*).

5.12 Maryann and Jake

Maryann and Jake, each 30, had been married for approximately six months and Maryann was a little over five months pregnant with their first child at the time of our interviews. Their pregnancy, though planned, had happened sooner than expected in between the couple's two wedding ceremonies (the first being a traditional civil ceremony and the second being a larger traditional Bengali Hindu ceremony). As both Jake and Maryann would describe, the pregnancy had proven to be a temporary source of stress for Maryann's mother, who worried that some of her more conservative family members might assume that the child had been conceived out of wedlock.

As a second year doctoral student in a social science discipline, Jake had met Maryann, a fourth year master's student in a similar discipline, during his own master's degree. Their friendship had eventually turned to romance and the two had moved in together soon after they began dating—approximately three years prior. They shared similar political views, a love of the outdoors, and both placed family as a priority in their lives. While Jake had progressed quickly through his own master's and hoped to one day become a professor, Maryann had experienced some difficulties with her degree and had taken a one year break to

work full-time in a student position in a local museum. At the time of our interviews, she was working hard to finish her thesis prior to the birth of their child. Conversely, Jake had plans to try and complete his comprehensive exams prior to the birth.

Fascinatingly, at the time that we spoke, neither Jake nor Maryann had disclosed the pregnancy to their respective supervisors. When I probed as to whether this hesitation had been motivated by fears that they would be met with a negative response, both replied that they thought their supervisors would be supportive, but mildly concerned about their timelines for degree completion. As a consequence, both had wanted to reach certain milestones in their research before disclosing the event.

Given the couple's experience as qualitative social science researchers, their interviews proved to be extremely relaxed and neither individual required much prompting from me to talk or expand upon their thoughts and experiences. As Maryann stated at the end of our final interview, "*we've talked your ear off*". Their disclosures have been used to construct the shortened narrative(s) on the following pages; however, an extended version can be found in Appendix V.

5.12.1 Maryann and Jake's Narrative(s)

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

During Maryann's first trimester, I made a pretty conscious choice to stay at home as much as I could...just to be around, to be able to be supportive...in terms of keeping our kitchen going and cleaning and everything else. When one person doesn't have energy or isn't feeling well enough to even sit up in bed, then you do what you have to do. I feel grateful for the flexibility that I've had with my studies. That's absolutely a positive of being in the faculty I am in. I don't have somebody looking over my shoulder wondering why I'm not at my desk—someone who expects you to be there for certain times.

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

Being grad students, the flexibility that our work provides is very conducive to the beginning stages of pregnancy. It's awesome! For example we have a midwife appointment tomorrow midday and Jake is able to easily attend that. During the first trimester it was a godsend because I was having some pretty bad symptoms and he just was there waiting on me, so that was very helpful and supportive and it just made me feel better.

Stephanie: Do you remember what motivated your initial decision to try to get pregnant?

When we were talking about sort of our preferences and our sort of general thoughts around family timing and planning, the main factors that we considered had more to do with biology and the fact that we're both 30 right now.

Stephanie: So now felt like the right time to try?

It was sort of not necessarily that right now is the best time, but there is no such thing as the best time. It was very much a mutual thing where we both agreed that it made more sense for us to try it and the earlier we kind of got started the better.

I feel like the reason we became pregnant now is that our friends and family were having difficulties either conceiving or having miscarriages. I just wanted to be proactive about it. I don't even know if it's true...the idea of needing to have children by 35. I mean for some women you could be safe and have a child and they're in their 40s. I think a lot of it has to do with energy levels. Like I know 10 years ago what I could handle and what I can handle now. I don't necessarily know that I always wanted to be a mom—I think it's changed. It's something that I've grown into wanting. I think, as a woman, being able to have a child is something that can be really tied to your identity. In terms of identity and being able to conceive.

Stephanie: How do you think you might manage everything once the baby arrives?

It's going to be really different, to add another person in the mix. Everything we understand about parenthood is that it becomes, obviously, a very sort of central thing in your life. Losing sleep, basically not being able to sleep continuously...being fatigued. It's hard to kind of envision the future when you don't know how out of whack it's going to become.

5.12.2 Narrative Analysis and Commentary

Maryann and Jake's narrative(s) focus specific attention on the experience of trainee fathers desiring a more involved relationship—an arguably more recent phenomenon within the academy. This process of involvement had begun when Maryann had encountered difficulties in her pregnancy and Jake took advantage of the flexibility afforded by his work schedule and relaxed departmental culture to spend more time at home. He did chores, took care of his wife when she was not feeling well, and generally tried to be 'present' for physical and emotional support. Maryann appeared appreciative of this flexibility in Jake's schedule—as it allowed him to attend things like midwife appointments—and viewed it as one of the potential benefits of having a child during graduate training. Once his and Maryann's baby was born, Jake hoped that the administrators in his department would continue be supportive of his need for work-related flexibility to manage his transition to parenthood: *hopefully I can have some understanding from the university administrators and supervisors; at least until a couple of months after the immediate aftermath has kind of passed and we develop a pattern or at least a greater comfort level.*

Interestingly, this type of engaged work/family management strategy is dramatically different from what has been practiced by many trainee men from previous academic generations (i.e. they often focused the bulk of their attention on their degree work, as opposed to family) and, indeed, even by some of the other male participants in my study. However, it could be argued that Jake's role as the primary breadwinner within his family—albeit with only a small graduate student stipend—reinforces a traditional gender role expectation for men as providers for their partners and/or children (e.g. *I'm earning something from being a grad student and that's obviously something that will need to continue. So taking on TAs or additional opportunities as they come up, for instance, that will be important*).

Both Jake and Maryann's narratives also provide insight into the complex nature of trainee leisure and the ways the lines between 'work time' and 'free time' can become blurred. In particular, social functions after work or at conferences had proven to be particularly challenging for Jake at the doctoral level, in that they had once been 'fun' outings for the couple to both engage in during their master's degrees. At the PhD level, however, the

purpose of these encounters had evolved and they were now seen as important networking opportunities by Jake for his future academic career:

There was a certain point, probably as the PhD program started off, where you start looking at how to be an effective grad student and how you can use your leisure time for this task. You've got to network. So going out for drinks with your colleagues changes from being a relaxing social time to being more like "I should stay because there's a guest speaker here and people are going out to the bar and maybe I could ask an intelligent question or just get some face time".

As a result, it would appear that Jake often felt obligated to participate (*e.g. it may be totally useless, but it may not you know. That person may be helpful down the line. It's very awkward, but you kind of put up with it*) and Maryann felt pressure to support his attendance (*e.g. I mean I understand that if Jake has school commitments or TA commitments that those need to come first for him*). Additionally, Maryann drew attention to the ways that these events, often held in pubs or at far away conference locations, were frequently not 'family-friendly', particularly for working mothers:

I mean I feel like grad school is this big old white men's club. So the types of activities that one participates in— grabbing a beer after class or going away to a lot of conferences or being devoted to academia—I don't know if those necessarily lend themselves to work/life balance or are very practical for a woman unfortunately, if she has a young child at home. You don't see a lot of young moms, or it doesn't matter if they're young moms or not—moms—in those types of environments.

Finally, both Maryann and Jake's reasons for wanting children during this period of their lives appeared very much in sync; although each presented a differing level of detail with regard to their thinking. Jake, for example, expressed only a general cognizance that his age (30) and *biology* were playing a role in his desire to want to become a parent sooner rather than later. While Maryann also described age as being important in her decision-making, her reasoning was much more detailed and included fears of infertility, miscarriage, and a general sense that older parents might lack the energy necessary for parenthood. Arguably, these differences could be attributed not only to differing gender role expectations within the family (*e.g. women traditionally being the child bearers and primary caregivers within their families*), but also women's disproportionate experience with pronatalist pressures (*e.g. Maryann's expressed belief that a woman's identity within society can be heavily tied to her ability to conceive a child*). The narrative element that the couple appeared to share, however, was a

general sense that parenthood would challenge them in ways they could not currently anticipate.

Chapter Six: Interlude

The following is another excerpt from my journal:

Winter 2014, age 31, year four of my PhD (two months into data collection)

Plopped in the middle of our bed, my face a mess of tears, snot, and dishevelled hair, I must be a sight to behold. “If not now, then when?” When will you finally be ready? When will you ever be ready?” I shout at Dave through the bedroom door I’ve just slammed, my chest heaving. He opens it calmly, his deep brown eyes fixed on mine. He takes a deep breath, presumably to keep himself from exploding. “Like I’ve said numerous times already, I just need some security in my life first”, he responds. “Why is it only about what you want? Why don’t my feelings matter?” he questions. “THEY DO MATTER”, I scream back, rising up on my knees in the bed, as if to pounce. How dare he imply that I haven’t considered his feelings! I sink back down onto the bed and lower my tone slightly for the verbal barrage that flows from me, my teeth slightly clenched: “You have no idea how hard it is, day in and day out, to interview people about starting a family...to read books and articles about pregnancy and parenthood...to listen to our friends talk about their pregnancies...to go to doctor’s appointments and listen to lectures about why I should best start having children soon, before it’s too late. You have no idea what it’s like to experience all of that—while actually wanting to have a child—all the while knowing that you are nowhere close to even trying”. His eyes soften, but his body remains stiff for his reply: “You’re absolutely right, Steph, I have no idea what that must be like. It’s probably incredibly hard, but it doesn’t change the way I feel. You have to face the fact that a child is just something that needs to wait and I’m not budging on that”. If I had something in my hand in this moment, it would probably be hurled in his direction.

As a person and as a partner, I pride myself on my willingness to approach conflict with respect, maturity, and a commitment to ‘fight’ fairly and honestly with any opponent. I believe in using my words (not fists), attacking ideas (not individuals), and communicating exactly how I feel in the clearest possible. But on this sunny Saturday afternoon in our cramped 600 square foot downtown condo, all of these lovely ideals were figuratively (and nearly literally) flying out the window.

It had started innocently enough—Dave had merely asked me how my data collection was going. It was a thoughtful question from a partner who genuinely cared, but one that did not have a straightforward answer. Much to my surprise, a flood of sentiments began to pour from my mouth. I spoke about the connection I felt with the participant group as a graduate student—that sense of feeling that you understand and are understood by individuals who

share similar career goals and have endured similar experiences. I talked about the physical fatigue I was feeling related to the five-hour roundtrip commute between my home and the study site; a trip I was making as many as six days a week for my interviews. I confessed the emotional exhaustion I was experiencing with the interview schedule and the surprising amount of energy required to actively listen and remain fully present in conversations with the participants. I also disclosed the internal conflict I was experiencing interviewing this group of articulate, accomplished individuals who really seemed to have a clear direction with regard to their family futures (i.e. they had their shit together, in my eyes). Listening to the group talk about their pregnancies, or their well thought out plans about when they might try to become pregnant, had begun to make me feel inadequate—as a person and as a researcher. Indeed, Dave and I had yet to come to a consensus on the issue of children and had avoided any real discussion about the topic since our wedding...seven months prior. Consumed by my own research, as well as an enjoyment of a lifestyle I could structure as I pleased, I had not been pressing the issue. Hell, I was just hanging on for dear life a lot of days. Unfortunately, our indecision (and the guilt that I had now metaphorically chained to it) were issues I was forced to revisit frequently with the participants when they inevitably asked “so when do you plan on becoming a mother?” Much to my dismay, I had begun to wonder how I could even conduct this research without making a firm commitment to parenthood myself. For me, the idea of parenthood was simply a hypothetical dream. The insider/outsider dynamic that I had attempted to cultivate with the participant group, from my perspective, was quickly becoming simply ‘outsider’.

I’m not entirely sure how long I had delivered this confessional, but it was at this moment that the tears began to well up in my eyes. Despite the whirlwind that was my life at the moment, all I really wanted was to become a mother. Seeing mothers pushing their laughing babies in strollers, wandering through Baby Gap staring at the tiny clothes and, most of all, holding my friends tiny babies in my arms were all visceral reminders that were becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. At first, it was a dignified cry—small sniffles and a misting of tears that could easily be dabbed away with a Kleenex. “Oh Steph, don’t cry”, Dave cooed. This made the tears fall faster—a warm, steady stream flowed down my cheek and onto my shirt. As Dave enveloped me in a comforting embrace, he whispered “we just

aren't there yet". I fell apart as I sank into his long arms, my body jerking as I sobbed. All the exhaustion, the stress, the disappointment, the yearning I have been feeling had overflowed, and all I could do can was surrender to it.

Had Dave left it at that, I would have had my cry, remembered that his ability to comfort me was one of the reasons I married him, and eventually pulled myself together. But he couldn't leave it alone. "Steph, we just aren't in the same position as your participants" he said assuredly, "we don't have the financial security that we need to have kids yet; we don't have much stability in our lives...we don't even know where we are going to be in a year". I blew my nose forcefully, generating a gigantic 'HONK'. I had to admit, he had a point. Between the two of us, we are often juggling four or five paid jobs just to afford our current expenses. A child would certainly simultaneously place additional financial strain on our family and leave us with less available time in which to perform such work. Dave continued: "daycare in this city is crazy expensive and, while I'm sure our families would love to help, they each live over an hour away". "That's true" I said, this time out loud. "We'd largely be on our own and it would require some pretty major shifts in our lifestyle". Indeed, our spur-of-the-moment trips to the pub with friends would likely be curtailed dramatically, in addition to my love of buying new shoes and Dave's taste for fine scotch whiskey. Now more emphatically, he stated "I just saw myself being in a different place in life before we had a kid. I wanted to be graduated and employed in a full-time, steady job. I at least need to know that I have a contract job for a least a few years before we even start trying to get pregnant". I'm began doing the mental math in my head: I'm 31 presently and Dave's at least a year away from graduating. If it takes him a little while to find a job, I'd be 33 or 34 before we would even be starting to think about growing our family. My tendency to worry kicked in at this moment, right on cue. "If we do things on your schedule, I'm going to be well into my thirties before we even start this whole baby process. What if I don't get pregnant right away? What if there are complications? What if I have a miscarriage? It's going to take time to figure that stuff out and by that time, I'll probably be 35" I replied. Wait, 35....did I just say 35? Alarms started to go off in my head. "SCARY AGE... DANGEROUS AGE...COMPLICATIONS" they blared, as I remembered all the magazine articles, news

media reports, and anecdotal stories I've been exposed to since adolescence about the risks of having children after 35. All the sadness I had been feeling was replaced with blind panic.

The fight that followed had been an epic one; one of the biggest in the seven years of so that we had been together. I yelled, he yelled. I sobbed, he shut down. At one point I climbed under our duvet and pulled the covers over my head, the way a child might do in an attempt to shut out the world. When the dust finally settled, all I had was a crushing headache and a sense that nothing had been resolved. I remained trapped in baby limbo.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

As a reminder, the purpose of my study was to explore what factors influence first time family planning amongst doctoral and postdoctoral trainees. Consequently, my research has sought to uncover 1) the elements that make up the training experience for academic trainees and their partners, 2) the attitudes, values, and contextual factors that contribute to their decision-making process surrounding parenthood and 3) the current lifestyles and work/life management of trainees and how these might change with parenthood. Indeed, the participant narratives presented in chapter five have addressed each of these elements and have brought to light the similarities with regard to thinking, behaviours, and experience that exist for the diverse group of participant couples. Thus, the discussion that takes place in this chapter will help to bring meaning to these narratives and is not only grounded in the research explored in the literature review, but expands into other published areas.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the factors impacting trainees, the training environment in which the trainees reside, and the relationships between trainees and their intimate partners. Having addressed these content areas, I then turn my attention to the specific factors that influenced trainee decision-making concerning family. Attention is paid to all the areas that impacted the trainees and their partners, including their desires, family roles, pressures, constraints, and supports both within and outside the academy. The chapter concludes with a critical discussion of the standpoints expressed in this research (i.e. women's and men's) and the ways these might be harnessed for change. For the purposes of continuity, the font formatting of supporting participant quotes in this chapter follows the same font structure (i.e. with regard to regular and italicized fonts) as the narrative findings.

7.1. The Trainee

In many ways, academic training can be likened to an emotional rollercoaster—an often turbulent ride complete with the highest of highs (e.g. when one gains admission; completes one's comprehensive exams, publishes a paper, or graduates) and the lowest of lows (e.g. when one fails to meet expectations, has a paper rejected, or experiences writers block or lengthy research delays). At some point, those who undertake this intellectual marathon will likely grapple with questions not only about why they are still engaged in training, but also

about the ways aspects of their identity and life may influence their academic journey (McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek & Hopwood, 2009). Without a doubt, individuals undertake training not in a vacuum, but in academic institutions with expectations regarding attitudes and behaviours, gender roles, one's use of time, and one's leisure. Discovering how these elements shape trainees and influence their experiences and decision-making about parenthood was one of the first tasks addressed by my research. In this first discussion section, I explore the attitudes and personal approaches that the trainee participants brought to their work, in addition to their gendered experiences within the academy. I also uncover the ways leisure might manifest for academic trainees and their families.

7.1.1 Attitudes and Personal Approaches

Undeniably, every experience of academic training is unique; however, there are elements involved with the pursuit that help to connect trainees across project, disciplinary, and institutional boundaries. Many individuals almost certainly begin doctoral or postdoctoral training with a certain sense of wonder about a topic or discipline of study that helps to motivate their work and quest for knowledge (Turner & McAlpine, 2007). This wonder is often accompanied by a notion that academic training may provide a valuable professional and/or personal experience that can add a richness to one's life (Vekkaila, Pyhalto & Lonka, 2014). Unfortunately, such idealistic approaches to training can be drowned out by a belief that to be productive and successful in the academy, one can never fully disengage from one's research (Anaya, Glaros, Scarborough & Tami, 2009; Gappa & MacDermid, 1997; Grant, Kennelly & Ward, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Consequently, the attitudes behind individual passions for research and the valuing of education, as well as the approaches to training that can contribute to trainee work/life (mis)management are important areas for discussion.

7.1.1.1 Passion for Research

Academic passion has been found to play an integral role in creating positive and successful training experiences for individuals and is, debatably, an emotional practice that often begins early in one's career as a student (Hopwood, Alexander, Harris-Huemmert, McAlpine & Wagstaff, 2011; Turner & McAlpine, 2011; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Several of the academic trainees in my study demonstrated a genuine passion for their work across multiple stages of the training experience (i.e. first year of doctoral studies all the way to upper year postdoctoral training). Much like Turner and McAlpine (2011) have described previously, this passion was specifically expressed through emotive language (e.g. Penelope: *it's what I love. I think that most of us do PhD studies because we love to read and we love to learn*; Emma: *I really loved writing my dissertation*) and motivational accounts (e.g. Vivian: *I'd have a wonderful opportunity to collaborate and build the narratives that were more invested in world I wanted to live in*; Scarlett: *I definitely would not have signed up for the PhD for another, how many more years, if I wasn't interested*), suggesting that many of the trainees derived some type of intellectual stimulation or satisfaction from their academic experience. Such accounts shed important light not only on the potential nature of the participants' academic commitment and enjoyment of the scholarly process, but also the reasons why these individuals likely undertook their training and, perhaps, persevered despite encountering challenges along the way (Burke & Stets, 2009; Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly, 2007; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Turner & McAlpine, 2011; Vekkaila, Pyhalto & Lonka, 2014; Virtanen & Pyhalto, 2012). Specifically, research into the attributes of high achieving individuals has found that grit (defined as perseverance and a passion for undertaking a long term goal) likely plays an essential role in the process of achievement (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly, 2007), especially if it is considered valuable in some way to an individual. Thus, it could be recommended that programs wishing to create a constructive learning environment for their trainees should seek out ways to keep these individuals connected with their passion for research (e.g. through additional training experiences or opportunities to mentor younger academics), in addition to nurturing the attribute of grit amongst individuals (e.g. through mentorship and departmental and/or institutional supports).

7.1.1.2 Valuing Education

Given the amount of time that many of the participants had spent in higher education, it was perhaps not shocking that most placed a high value on their education. For some, this process was rooted in their upbringing and attitudes related to learning that were encouraged by family, faith, or early exposure to higher learning. Curtis' Mormon upbringing, for

example, stressed the importance of education in the process of ‘bettering oneself’. Indeed, within this faith’s religious teachings, there is immense value attached to intellectual and skills development, as it is felt that such training will bring one closer to God—both on earth and in the afterlife (Pew Research Centre, 2009). Consequently, it could be speculated that within certain faith groups, educational training may hold an element of social capital for individuals who are able to achieve at extremely high levels (e.g. doctoral or postdoctoral training).

Separate from faith, an emphasis being placed on education during childhood was also influential in several of the participants’ decisions to pursue graduate studies. Particularly for the participants who had grown up in homes with academic parents, the ways in which this older generation’s educational experiences were discussed and valued was formative and seemed to impact the younger’s choice to pursue a similar path. Such accounts provide some insights into the seemingly unexplored ways adult children may be influenced by the education pursuits (and in all likelihood, biases) of their parents—a potential future area of inquiry for research into postgraduate education.

Finally, while it was only alluded to in passing by one of the participants, there was evidence in my study that education could also provide trainees with an invaluable transcendent experience (e.g. Anish: *those willing to get a PhD have a different level, like a different attitude or viewpoint...there’s almost a free spirit about [academics], an understanding that there’s something else better out there*). Much like Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid (2009) who described doctoral students as being “monkish in their devotion and slavish in their pursuit of knowledge” (pp. 438), this particular finding suggests that trainees may possess different priorities in life (i.e. timelines for personal or professional milestones; attitudes about money or material possessions) and may be willing to sacrifice for the sake of their intellectual aspirations. Unfortunately, if trainees tread too far into the ‘slavish’ domain of knowledge pursuit, aspects of their personal well-being can be compromised.

7.1.1.3 Workaholism and Burnout

Similar to previously published literature (Anaya, Glaros, Scarborough & Tami, 2009; American Association of University Professors, 2001; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013),

my study showcased trainees and trainee partners who perceived academia as an industry that demanded that its workers remain consistently engaged with their research. While the participants' reported long workdays are certainly not unique to academia, the number of participants who communicated their workaholic tendencies and their perceived potential for burnout was illuminating with regard to both their professional and personal decision-making.

The term workaholic, first coined by Oates (1971), refers to those individuals who possess a desire to engage in work that is so exaggerated that it poses a threat not only to their physical well-being (through loss of sleep, stress, physical inactivity or poor eating patterns), but also their happiness, ability to engage in leisure activities, and social relationships with others. Within the competitive environment of academia, however, this single mindedness with regard to one's work could also very well be advantageous, in that it provides individuals with more time to think, write, and produce research. Consequently, it is not unusual to find academic trainees and professors being professionally rewarded for workaholic behaviours—whether it be through publications, tenure, grant funding, or the respect of the their professional peers (Boje & Tyler, 2009). Given this reality, it was unsurprising that a few of the participant trainees self-identified as workaholics (Anish: *I used to be a workaholic actually, during my PhD*; Sophia: *James [my partner] is a workaholic so he respected that about me...He can be up until 2 o'clock in the morning doing the same thing*). Interestingly, while Sophia (a doctoral trainee who was unmarried) expressed little interest in changing her workaholic tendencies in the near future, Anish (a postdoctoral trainee who was married) had largely 'reformed' his working habits as he progressed to the postdoctoral stage of his training (i.e. he did his best to work a more consistent work schedule and did not take work home with him). Though only speculative, this finding suggests that trainees may choose to temper their workaholic tendencies based on factors such as level of training, achievement of a particular goal (e.g. passing their comprehensive exams, publishing a high impact paper, graduating), or changes in their personal lives (e.g. getting married; becoming a parent).

Those who incessantly engage in workaholic patterns may eventually find themselves at the point of burnout, an experience that Maslach and Leiter (2008) have found to manifest as generalized work exhaustion (e.g. Sophia: *the work almost killed me; I'll get very tired, very burnt out*), feelings of anger (e.g. Edward: *[I get] very cranky...I'm probably kind of a shitty*

person to live with), or as a sense that one is inadequate at simultaneously managing work and personal responsibilities (e.g. Vivian: *I tend to go through periods where my personal life is awesome and then my doctoral work doesn't happen. Or my personal life is non-existent and lots of doctoral work happens*). Unfortunately, among academic trainees, those reaching this stage of physical and mental exhaustion have been found to become disengaged from their work and may, in some cases, quit altogether—disastrous outcomes for supervisors and departments who may have invested time and money into their training (Golde, 2000; Heijstra & Rafnsdottir, 2010; Wall, 2008). Consequently, it seems necessary for academic supervisors and departments work with their trainees to recognize these symptoms of burnout and mitigate their negative impacts.

An incidental finding among the six male and six female doctoral and postdoctoral participants in my study was that a greater percentage of the female participants described (or had a partner observe) experiences of workaholism and burnout/near burnout (i.e. two men, four women). Recent studies into the lifestyles of doctoral candidates have reported similar outcomes (Martinez, Ordu, Della Sala & McFarlane, 2013; Paksi, 2015), implying that academic trainee women may be disproportionately impacted by the expectations or institutional structures involved with their working and/or personal lives. Given this, the next discussion subsection will devote specific attention to gendered aspects that may influence a trainee's experience.

7.1.2 Gendered Experiences

Up until the end of the last century, gender was not generally considered a pressing point of concern within academia, due in large part to the disproportionate number of men occupying roles as trainees and established academics (Coltrane, 2004; Knights & Richards, 2003). As a result, universities were traditionally designed to meet the needs of men and, arguably, exploit the supports often held by this group (Anderson & Mieziotis, 1999; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008). Thus, while women may not have historically pursued academic training in large numbers, they frequently occupied a supporting role (e.g. performed domestic responsibilities, childcare) in the lives of the men who did (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). This reality was,

indeed, not lost on many of the participants in my study (e.g. Emma: *historically men were able to have a family and a career because someone stayed home*; Peter: *mostly men did PhD programs and their wives, if they were married, would be the one who could do all this other life stuff*). Fortunately, a rise in female enrollment in doctoral programs has encouraged greater focus on exploring the gendered experience of academic training (Statistics Canada, 2011; Wall, 2008; Brown & Watson, 2010). Within the context of my research, gender proved to be an extremely salient issue and one that several participants (mostly female) spoke about in varying detail.

7.1.2.1 Women's Experiences

Author Yoshino (2006) has suggested that despite witnessing an increase in the enrollment of women in academic training, universities “retain cultures favouring men” (pp. 145). Several of the participants in my study expressed an awareness of the ways their gender could pose certain challenges to their training (Brown & Watson, 2010). For example, statements such as *I am the first girl in my research group, ever* (Scarlett); *usually [in my culture], girls won't go to college* (Divya); *the expectations on women are different*, and *I don't think academia is set up very well for women at all* (Vivian) speak to a marginalized status for women in the academy, largely shaped by contemporary androcentric academic cultures that provide an inherent advantage to men (Anderson & Miezitis, 1999; Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Erickson, 2012; Haake, 2008; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008). Perhaps out of necessity, many female trainees (including several of the women in my research) have chosen to open their eyes to the gendered politics frequently at play within the context of their training.

It was clear that the role of gender in the relationship between female trainees and their academic mentors was an important issue for several of the women in my study. Much like the findings of previous research, these mentors (direct supervisors being the most frequently mentioned) were pivotal figures for the women who helped to shape their training experiences through academic and personal support (Ülkü-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes & Kinlaw, 2000; Dua, 2007). Despite these positive experiences, the women did not always see their own gender reflected back at them through their closest mentors. To be specific, among the five female

trainees who discussed their supervisors (i.e. only postdoctoral trainee Emma did not mention her supervisor) only Sophia, a social science student, reported having a female supervisor. This finding corroborates the historical predominance of men in academia and the reported lack of female role models to serve in mentorship roles for fledgling female academics, particularly within male-dominated STEM disciplines (Alpay, Hari, Kambouri, Aheran, 2010; Dua, 2007; Erickson, 2012; Ferreira, 2003). Put simply, fewer women enrolled in academic training in the past has led to fewer women occupying positions as assistant, associate, or full professors in universities and colleges today—the very individuals who serve as research mentors. Unfortunately, this dearth of female academics to serve in these important leadership roles may deprive many female trainees of invaluable professional support, as well as advice about surviving and thriving within a male-dominated academic culture (Acker, 2001; Ülkü-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes & Kinlaw, 2000; Wall, 2008). Consequently, my research supports current literature that suggests the important role female mentors may play in the shaping of female academic trainees (Cumings-Mansfield, Welton, Lee & Young, 2010; Dua, 2007).

This reduced number of women reported in positions of academic leadership may also have an impact on the work/life management support provided to female trainees. Indeed, it has been suggested that even male supervisors with the best of leadership intentions may lack sufficient understanding of issues commonly experienced by female trainees (Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Erickson, 2012; Haake, 2008). For example, the concerns surrounding child-bearing, childrearing and personal relationships that were voiced by the female participants in my research have been previously described as areas where support may be lacking for female trainees, particularly when their supervisors are male (Ülkü-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes & Kinlaw, 2000; Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013). As a result, women may face increased pressure to co-manage their academic and domestic responsibilities (Carter, Watson & Cook, 2013), but may be met with less empathy from men in positions of academic power. Indeed, the frustrations expressed by several of the female participants about their stresses being largely dismissed by their male supervisors also speaks to the ways women's life pressures may be rendered invisible within academic circles, in part because they may be

considered a 'normal' or 'necessary' part of women's everyday time management (Bruffee, 1999; Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Wall, 2008).

Those female trainees who are able to secure a female supervisor do not appear immune to issues related to expectation and priorities, as was the case for one of the trainee partners in my study, Zhara (e.g. *it was really impossible to manage both life and studies. I didn't like it because I couldn't take enough time for my family. It was because of my supervisor's expectations*). Without a doubt, a female supervisor who is unsympathetic to the stresses associated with a trainee work and domestic responsibilities may have a negative impact on an individual's training experience and, potentially, contribute to feelings of social isolation (Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Wall, 2008). Sadly, trainees expressing feelings of being torn between their desires for family and a supervisor's work expectations have also been reported previously and are thought to be one of the contributors to the high attrition rate observed among women in doctoral programs in recent decades (Lovitts, 2001; Ferreira, 2003; Lott, Gardner & Powers, 2009). Alas, much like many of the reported female trainees before her, Zhara found her doctoral supervisor's expectations so incompatible with her life priorities that she opted to quit her PhD and leave with a master's degree—an outcome that has been recounted previously by Schroeder and Mynatt (1993).

Another important gendered facet of academic training identified in my research was communication style. Unfortunately, the androcentric bias that has traditionally existed within the academy has led to the valuing of traits associated with hegemonic masculinity (e.g. quests for power, competitiveness, aggressiveness) over those commonly associated with femininity, such as intuitiveness or collegiality (Barata, Hunjan & Leggatt, 2005; Knights & Richards, 2003). As a consequence, female academics may feel pressure to adhere to a more traditionally 'male' communication style if they are to be perceived as successful (Barata, Hunjan & Leggatt, 2005; Knights & Richards, 2003), despite any discomfort they may experience with its enactment:

I have a comps committee that has four men on it and I have to walk into that room and take command. I can't act vulnerable. So I end up trying to be exceptionally aggressive, but then it makes them forget that I am a vulnerable person. So it creates a bit of a feedback loop where they end up being a little bit more aggressive than they should be

and we start talking over each other. It's this fight for power that I think men often get into that women aren't used to (Penelope)

Participant accounts such as this one draw attention not only to the perception that junior academic women interacting with senior academic men should be aggressive (perhaps as a way of standing their ground academically or proving their competence), but also the risks posed to women who adopt more traditionally 'masculine' styles of engagement when interacting with others. Interestingly, experiences like the one above are supported by research that suggests that women who demonstrate dominance or assertiveness in their interactions with others (male or female) are likely to be met with aggression and hostility as punitive action (Krefting 2003; Lee, Fiske & Glick, 2010).

Finally, related to this notion of communication styles is the concept of covering, a process through which individuals from a marginalized group attempt to make their differences less threatening (Yoshino, 2006; Erickson, 2012). While those engaged in the act of covering do not attempt to 'hide' aspects of their identity (as would be the case with passing), they do seek to make them less of a target for being singled out or excluded from a group. As has been relayed previously among academic trainee communities (Erickson, 2012), covering may involve a non-dominant group (in most disciplines, women) avoiding discussion about the ways their gender may influence their training experience (e.g. Scarlett: *[It's] funny that people think that my training is going to be a new experience because I'm a girl, but it's just the same experience*), or de-gendering their experience altogether (e.g. Penelope: *I've never been that person to go and talk about my life stresses and say why it will impact my work. Instead I just try and push through and I think that's expected of a lot of stronger women*).

Within several of the trainee women's narratives, the notion of wanting to be perceived not only as a 'good student,' but also a 'good female student' was only subtly buried. Unfortunately, such concerns have been reported by other female academics who struggle to demonstrate that they are 'good' women in a variety of life realms (Wall, 2008). According to Wall, 'good' women take care of their families and their domestic responsibilities, but 'good' academic women concurrently meet their deadlines, secure funding, and demonstrate work-related competence. The recognition of such pressures certainly helps to illuminate the desire

of many of the women in my study to downplay their gender. Having now explored the gendered experiences of academic training for women, I will discuss those reported by the male participants.

7.1.2.2 Men's Experiences

As has been described previously, men have been found to use realms such as career and family to act as stages for masculine demonstration (Connell, 2005; Friedman, 2015; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). Such hegemonic displays of masculinity frequently provide privilege to those men who enact them, but at the same time marginalize those who do not—or cannot—conform (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Armato (2013) has suggested that an academic career-related masculinity (much like other masculine identities) is relational and, as a consequence, requires 'academically masculine' men to measure themselves against other men (e.g. men with greater or lesser power within the academy; non-academic men). Unlike physically demanding vocations (e.g. labourer, hunter, fisher, firefighter) which privilege characteristics such as strength, stamina, and toughness, the academy instead encourages the display of masculine identities that are intellectually or interpersonally focused (i.e. writing successful grant applications, forging powerful research collaborations, publishing thought-provoking papers). Consequently, those men in diminished positions of power within an academic environment (e.g. trainees, untenured professors) may feel increased pressure to establish an academically masculine identity based on such traits.

Building on the idea of academic masculinity, authors O'Connor, O'Hagan and Brannen (2015) have proposed sub-academic masculinities with varied commitments to the realms of 'career' and 'personal life' (mainly, relationships with one's family). These include a) careerist masculinity (i.e. the possession of a strong career commitment and a weak family commitment), b) enterprising masculinity (i.e. the possession of a strong commitment to both career and family), c) pure scientific masculinity (i.e. the possession of a weak career and a weak family commitment) and, d) family-oriented breadwinning masculinity (i.e. the possession of a weak career commitment and a strong family commitment). Among the six male academic trainees included in the participant group,

examples of two of these masculinities (i.e. careerist masculinity and enterprising masculinity) were found to exist.

Firstly, certain male participant accounts about placing a strong emphasis on work and paying less attention to other life spheres (including family) speak to the presence of the careerist masculine identity first suggested by O'Connor, O'Hagan and Brannen (e.g. Anish: *I used to stay late, but I mean at that time I was not married, so I could come in any morning to catch up*; Jason: *I would be okay with [Larissa] going home to her family while I am finishing up writing my thesis...I wouldn't take any time off unless something unforeseen happened*; Zhara: *men don't pay attention generally to their family that much when they are grad students...they just pay attention to their studies*). This prioritization of work over family is very much aligned with traditional role expectations for men within the academy and society at large; though both could be claimed to presume that men will either not have a family or have a partner at home to take care of domestic responsibilities (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Anderson & Mieзитis, 1999; Coltrane, 2004; Connell, 2005; Huang, 2008; Knights & Richards, 2003; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). Consequently, within many historic and current academic environments, a careerist masculine identity could very well be considered 'ideal', as it allows a considerable amount of time and energy to be devoted to one's research. One important consideration, however, is that all of the male participants in my study who spoke to a careerist masculine identity resided in STEM disciplines—areas of study that have traditionally been male dominated and normally require researchers to be physically present within a laboratory working environment (Hango, 2013; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). As a result, these men may have experienced greater pressure from peers or supervisors to prioritize their work over their family obligations. Additionally, the men may have possessed less flexibility in their schedules to permit working remotely, a strategy that has been suggested to aid in the co-management of work and family obligations (Chesser, 2015; Heijstra & Rafnsdottir, 2010).

Career versus family commitments, however, appeared to be in flux over time for some of the male participants, particularly after they committed to a partner and/or family (e.g. Yaser: *I'm trying to be more optimized with my time, now that I have a family...I feel you should divide your time to be with your family*; Curtis: *family was really important in my*

master's university because it *is a church university*. *I don't know if professors would be fired per se, but it would not bode well for a professor to not have their family life in order*). As a consequence, the careerist masculine identity displayed by some of the men was found to shift toward an enterprising masculine identity with a stronger emphasis on family and the resource of time (O'Connor, O'Hagan & Brannen, 2015). Within this masculine identity construction, men who effectively budgeted the hours in their day were likely seen as having a better chance at 'success', both at work and at home. Debatably, in some non-secular academic environments which place an emphasis on the importance of family (e.g. Curtis' Mormon master's institution), there is speculative evidence that an enterprising masculine identity may be more ideally positioned. Thus, Curtis' statement that it would '*not bode well*' for men who do not conform to certain work or family expectation points to a marginalization of men who display other academic masculinities (e.g. careerist or purely scientific). Indeed, this type of tactic has been reported previously in work examining masculine hierarchies and the distribution of power within and between masculine identities (Cheng, 1999; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Coston & Kimmel, 2012).

Finally, I feel it is important to mention what did not appear in most of the men's narratives—mainly, a description of a male training experience. Indeed, despite asking each of the men about ways that gender might influence their training, I found that few of the men expressly tended to notions of privilege or marginalization (Edward was the notable exception). This finding speaks to the androcentric nature of the academy and the notion that an 'academic experience' has often only been regarded as a 'male experience' (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Anderson & Mieztis, 1999; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008). It also supports the notion put forth by gender scholar Michael Kimmel in a 2015 TED Talk when he stated "privilege is invisible to those who have it". Having discussed the ways that attitudes and approaches to training, as well as gender may influence trainees, I will conclude this section by examining the roles leisure might play in the trainee experience.

7.1.3 Leisure Experiences

A 2015 opinion article published by scientist and writer Chris Woolston in the stratospherically high impact science journal, *Nature*, recently made a case for the roles of

leisure in the lives of successful academics—a relatively underexplored topic in published literature. Acknowledging that research funds are becoming more and more scarce, and that scientists continue to report feeling as though there are never enough hours in the day, Woolston steadfastly advises those looking to live a happy, healthy, and academically productive existences to leave the laboratory and get a hobby. In his words:

“There can be subtle — or not so subtle — pressures to sacrifice leisure time and put aside other interests for the sake of the next experiment, paper or conference talk. But many scientists say that their pastimes make them better researchers by sharpening their minds, building confidence and reducing stress. Their experiences should offer hope to researchers who are feeling overwhelmed by the pressure of their jobs” (pp. 117).

To make his case, the author interviewed a number of academics, at both the professorial and trainee level, to learn about the various ways each went about incorporating leisure into their lives. Some played in rock bands, others climbed rock faces. Still others jumped out of airplanes, while their colleagues biked across countries, told jokes on stage, or cooked gourmet meals at home. One even punched people in the face in the confines of a boxing ring when he felt he needed to let off some professional steam. What all these individuals had in common, however, was a sense that their pastimes allowed them to be better researchers, mentors, and teachers. While the article itself was written in a fairly tongue-in-cheek style and is largely directed towards an audience in the natural sciences, it raises some important questions about the value and nature of leisure among those all individuals working in the academic community—trainees included.

7.1.3.1 Academic Training as Leisure

In their 2001 work examining adult structured learning as leisure, authors Jones and Symon expressed the idea that non-compulsory education could be a freeing and personally fulfilling activity for individuals. They contend that the notion of ‘learning for learning’s sake’ (i.e. not driven entirely by career advancement) offers individuals the opportunity for self-expression (through one’s choice of study area) and self-actualization, through one’s potential for intellectual fulfillment and challenge (pp 270). Their work is supported by higher education research by Quinn (2007) and Harris (2012) who suggest that individuals can create leisure experiences by taking pleasure in the act of intellectual creativity and free thought. Whilst much of the learning discussed by academic trainees in my study would likely be

classified as ‘work’ (i.e. it that it involved monetary or career-related compensation in the form of a degree), it provides some basis for the argument that aspects of the doctoral or postdoctoral training process may be experienced as leisure.

The blurring of the lines between academic labour and freely experienced leisure was evident for several of my study’s participants, suggesting that their training served a combined work and leisure purpose (Harris, 2012; Jones & Symon, 2001; Quinn, 2007). For some, academic training provided the opportunity to hone skills or expand one’s knowledge base through a process that was interesting and challenging (e.g. Edward: [I] *read everything news...the Financial Times, The Globe and Mail [for my own] edification*; Emma: *I really loved writing my dissertation*)—important leisure components that have been described previously (Gould & Carson, 2008; Stebbins, 2001b; Trenberth, 2005).

For others, the line between their academic work and leisure was simply blurry or, arguably, non-existent (e.g. Sophia: *it's hard to define that line between [them]*; Penelope: *when I try and think about what I could do to relax, I have a really hard time figuring out what that would be because my work is what I enjoy*). While enjoyment of the work involved with academic training can help to make the experience a more positive one for individuals, there may come times when an affiliation for the work could create problems in one’s personal life and relationships (e.g. Penelope: *I'll come home and talk too much about what I do and it impacts Louis and my relaxation time together*). In this case, it could be contended that a work/leisure duality has the potential to take a darker turn and become detrimental to a trainee’s overall well-being (Stenseng, Rise & Kraf, 2011). Indeed, fixation on a perceived leisure outlet, to the extent that attitudes or involvement become obsessive, has been linked to decreased aspects of personal well-being, interpersonal conflict, and addiction issues (Stenseng, Rise & Kraf, 2011). Among the participants in my research, this singular focus may have also contributed to the workaholic tendencies and burnout experiences described previously.

Despite such concerns, the pleasure, fulfillment, and potential for self-expression related to academic study found among the participants has been described previously (Harris, 2012; Jones & Symon, 2001; Quinn, 2007), and could be argued to contribute to a more positive

overall training experience for individuals. As such, findings ways to nurture these types of associations could be of particular importance to North American doctoral programs, as many institutions have struggled with increased attrition rates in recent decades (Golde, 2000; Litalien & Guay, 2015). Consequently, further research into the work/leisure duality that may exist for doctoral and postdoctoral trainees could be warranted for this purpose.

7.1.3.2 Serious and Casual Leisure

In addition to providing outlets through which to enrich our lives, leisure can stimulate feelings of relaxation, offer a temporary distraction from one's responsibilities, and may play a role in buffering life's stresses (Dillard & Bates, 2011; Hutchinson & Kleiber, 2005; Iwasaki, 2001; Nimrod, Kleiber & Berdychevsky, 2012; Sonnentag, 2012; Stebbins, 1997; Woolston, 2015). All of these benefits could, without a doubt, be beneficial to trainees enduring the academic, institutional, financial, and personal stresses commonly associated with their training (Offstein, Larson, McNeill & Hasten, 2004; Oswalt & Riddock, 2007). Research examining the specific roles of leisure in stress coping among university students has found that having regular time for leisure is an important resource for managing academic and life stresses (Martinez, Ordu, Della Sala & McFarlane, 2013; Welle & Graf, 2011)—an idea specifically voiced by one of my study's participants (e.g. Sophia: *you have leisure moments which you hold on to for dear life when you're getting through the roughest of rough days*). When one's academic studies were not able to provide these types of benefits, however, many needed to look for leisure experiences outside their training.

For one of the study participants, Emma, a serious leisure outlet (e.g. running) offered one such avenue. This activity, which she engaged in daily for multiple hours at a time, provided some physical benefits (i.e. weight control) and helped shape an aspect of her identity (e.g. a runner with a runner's body), two benefits of serious leisure participation that have been described previously (Stebbins, 2001b). The rest of the trainee participants, conversely, appeared to choose more casual forms of leisure to unwind (Stebbins, 1997). Specifically, activities such as *going for a walk* (Emma), *going to a bar* (Emma), reading the newspaper (Edward), *window shopping* (Divya), watching TV (Louis), *watching apocalypse movies* (Penelope), reading books (Penelope), and watching *an episode of House of Cards*

(Jake) were all examples of casual leisure discussed by the trainee participants. Such activities perhaps offered a less 'intense' leisure experience for the group (a potentially appealing trait for participants that appeared to already be living busy lives) and may have provided a strong element of pleasure (Hutchinson & Kleiber, 2005; Stebbins, 2001; Shinew & Parry, 2005). For the most part, these activities were described as taking place after working hours and/or on weekends, were frequently impromptu (i.e. undertaken if the individual or couple had some free time), and were often used as a way for participants to unwind and enjoy themselves through a pleasurable activity. Additionally, it should be noted that most were completely free or relatively inexpensive pursuits, an important consideration given the limited financial resources reported among many academic trainees (Mitchell et al., 2013; Litalien & Guay, 2015; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009).

Although a few of the casual leisure activities mentioned by the participants appeared solitary in nature (e.g. reading, watching television), many others were portrayed as important social bonding opportunities between partners (e.g. going for a walk, going to a bar). This finding is supported by authors such as Glover and Parry (2008), Hutchinson and Kleiber (2005), Stebbins (2001a), and Sharaievska, Kim and Stodolska (2013) who have all communicated the assistance casual leisure can provide to the process of building and strengthening interpersonal relationships and intimacy. Although the participants did not always elaborate on the specific nature of their shared time together, the personal value that it held for them was evident (e.g. Edward: *when we get to see each other, it's a lot nicer*; Vivian: *we're still a family and you have to do that family time*; Yaser: *you have to spend some specific time with your family*), suggesting that it was a vital component of the couple's lives together.

When the moments couples had together was under threat by work responsibilities, several participants described making efforts to ensure this shared time was made a priority (e.g. Vivian: *it is important to us that we have that time*; Yaser: *I really wanted to spend some time with my wife when I came home*; Larissa: *I think he worked Monday to Friday hard just so he had weekends with me and we tried to go do things locally*). Such findings are supported by longitudinal research that has found couples today prioritizing leisure time together much more than previous generations; often spending over 50% of their total free hours engaged in

activities together (Voorpostel, van der Lippe & Gershuny, 2010). Nevertheless, these authors do concede that free time spent with one's partner does not necessarily imply that both individuals are engaged in the same activity, thus its impact on the relationship and intimacy building possibilities could be debated.

7.1.3.3 Notions of 'Free Time' Amongst Couples

Given the extremely hectic nature of their lives, free time (i.e. time not occupied by paid work, unpaid work either inside or outside the home, or personal care activities) appeared to be a finite resource for many participant couples (e.g. Vivian: *I have such a limited amount of time to begin with*; Peter: *I had to make a big change to the amount of down time I usually prefer to have*; Emma: *I don't have time basically*). This finding suggests that many of the academic trainees and their partners may have been experiencing the modern day 'time crunch' routinely reported among dual earning couples in recent decades (Goodin, Rice, Bittman & Saunders, 2005; Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Hopwood, Alexander, Harris-Huemmert, McAlpine & Wagstaff, 2011; Martinez, Ordu, Della Sala & McFarlane, 2013). Thus, to accomplish more in the way of daily output, several of the trainees and their partners described completing work outside of regular working hours or devoting time that might otherwise be 'free' (and potentially used for leisure) to the completion of paid work or household chores. Unfortunately, such working habits have been shown to have negative impacts on families by increasing work/family conflict, decreasing reported relationship satisfaction, and contributing to the neglect of a relationship with an intimate partner (Bakker, Demerouti & Burke, 2009).

Perhaps as a way of mitigating these negative relationship outcomes, several of the couples described their attempts to at least be together in the same physical space when engaging in 'work' at home (e.g. James: *a lot of our together time is spent in the same room with one another, but working on separate things*; Peter: *we hang out...working together*). One couple had even gone as far as to turn household chores into a *fun* shared activities to increase the time they had to spend together—a strategy described by Hilbrecht (2013, pp. 177) as “finding leisure in everyday moments.” Yet another participant appeared to merge a shared leisure activity with her husband (i.e. watching a movie) with a household chore (i.e.

cooking). This particular time management strategy of combining work and leisure has been described previously, particularly among time-strapped women juggling paid and unpaid work responsibilities (Sullivan, 1997). In any case, among the couples who incorporated some form of work into their time spent together, the quality of their leisure experience (and by extension, the potential leisure benefits for the individual or couple) could be debated to have been ‘contaminated’ by the co-management of a secondary task (Hilbrecht, 2013; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003).

7.1.3.4 Departmental Social Leisure

Within my study, social interaction during casual leisure did not only appear to take place within couples, but also between individuals in academic circles (e.g. departmental barbeques, going for drinks after work). Interestingly, many of these university-related leisure opportunities appeared to involve some element of alcohol consumption (e.g. Jake: *grabbing a beer after class*; Vivian: *my department's get-togethers at the peer level are always drinking events*). Indeed, numerous studies over the past several decades examining drinking on North American college and university campuses have found this to be a common leisure activity within undergraduate student populations (Carlson, Johnson & Jacobs, 2010; Finlay, White, Mun, Cronley & Lee, 2012; Shinew & Parry, 2005; Tremblay et al., 2010); however, similar findings have been witnessed among graduate students (Koppel, 2005; Martinez, Ordu, Della Sala & McFarlane, 2013). For students in general, however, drinking alcohol has been found to be a way to build relationships with others (Finlay, White, Mun, Cronley & Lee, 2012; Shinew & Parry, 2005).

While a few of the participants implied that these drinking get-togethers served a social purpose for trainees, they alluded to the rather complex relationship the activity could have with their academic careers. Indeed, one trainee, Jake, felt pressure to engage in certain drinking opportunities as a way of nurturing social relationships with those both inside and outside his department:

You've got to network. So going out for drinks with your colleagues changes from being a relaxing social time to being more like "I should stay because there's a guest speaker here and people are going out to the bar and maybe I could ask an intelligent

question or just get some face time. It may be totally useless, but it may not you know. That person may be helpful down the line (Jake)

As a result, the classification of such get-togethers as ‘leisure’ could be brought into question, in large part because they could be perceived by the trainees as mandatory working events masquerading as voluntary, informal occasions (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011). Additionally, while none of the participants described excessive drinking taking place during these academic-related encounters, research on alcohol consumption among college and university students suggests that the potential for this activity to take a ‘dark leisure’ turn exists, in the form of binge drinking or dependency issues (Rojek, 1999; Wheeler, 2010). Nevertheless, offering frequent, appealing, and inclusive informal opportunities for doctoral students to socialize with those in their departments has been shown to be a successful strategy to increase feelings of trainee support, belonging and social capital (Ali & Kohun, 2007). By extension, these opportunities may also contribute to decreased rates of attrition within this group (Golde, 2000). Having comprehensively discussed several aspects of trainee life, I will now turn my attention to several elements involved in the training experience.

7.2 The Training

While certain elements of academic training likely differ along with each institution’s culture, pedagogical approach, and policies, there are fundamental components that are largely shared across all doctoral and postdoctoral programs. Consequently, this second discussion section unpacks three of these key areas (i.e. comprehensive exams, research environment, and stage of training) and explores the ways the training experience influenced the personal and professional decision-making of the participant group.

7.2.1 Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive exams proved to be a nearly universal topic of conversation within the interviews with the doctoral trainee participants and a salient component of their training experience—particularly if they had not yet completed this degree requirement. As has been described previously (Schafer & Giblin, 2008), this academic milestone has often served as a rite of passage amongst trainees, as well as a way for doctoral committees to assess the capabilities of a student and their suitability to continue in their program of study. As such, it

was not surprising to find that these exams were often a source of stress for trainees and, at times, their partners (e.g. Scarlett: *when I was under a lot of stress, I wasn't able to get pregnant. Like getting ready for my comps, for instance, was NOT a good time; Jake: between activities that I'm doing related to my TA and getting ready for comps, at the end of the day I want to just sort of relax and have some down time; James: as long as Sophia's passes her comps*). These reactions are certainly not unique, as the physical and mental health challenges posed by these exams have been described in higher education literature for decades (Kardatzke, 2009; Malaney, 1988). As a result, leisure outlets could be argued to be of particular importance to individuals during this stage of training, as they may provide much needed feelings of pleasure and distraction, in addition to stress buffering.

As one's comprehensive exams can often serve as a 'make or break' moment in a doctoral student's training, their successful completion was sometimes viewed by the participants as a way to solidify their commitment to a program of study. Thus, those students who passed and made the move from 'doctoral student' (pre-comprehensives) to 'doctoral candidate' (post-comprehensives) could be viewed, by both themselves and their departments, as having a more invested trainee identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). Therefore, the process of overcoming this academic hurdle often brought a sense of relief for the participants and their families and frequently freed up valuable time and mental space (e.g. e.g. Scarlett: *I have defined my research at this point, so I guess just mentally there are less variables in that part of my life*). This is perhaps why it was interesting to find that several of the female doctoral participants specifically described being given the advice to wait until after completing their comprehensive exams to become a parent.

Such a recommendation is likely related to several training phenomena that have been described previously, including the 'lull' that often exists for individuals who have successfully passed their comprehensive exams. Indeed, this 'decompression' period after the completion of one's comprehensives (when individuals may take time off from their work) could very well serve as one of the time 'windows' that female academics have been described seeking out for the purposes of pursuing a family (Grover, 2007; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). Alternatively, research examining doctoral student attrition has found that the most likely period for students to leave their programs is before the

successful completion of their comprehensive exams (Hardy, 2015). Consequently, waiting until after the completion of this milestone to start a family could be one way for female trainees to better establish their footing in their programs and, potentially, increase their likelihood of graduating.

7.2.2 Research Environment

As has been reported before, the type of training a trainee is engaged in (i.e. doctoral versus postdoctoral), their discipline of study, and the nature of their research (e.g. in a laboratory, in the field, through document review) likely all play an important role in shaping an individual's work environment and schedules (Finn, 2005; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Peters, 1997). This was certainly found to be the case for the trainee participants in my study, many of whom provided specific details about their day-to-day research experiences. Among the doctoral and postdoctoral participants from STEM disciplines, for example, there was a sense that their schedules were largely inflexible—mostly because their research frequently required tangible results and specialized equipment found only in a laboratory environment (e.g. Zhara: my old PhD supervisor *expected, for example, that something gets finished* before we leave for the day. *So I actually worked into the night*; Anish: *I can't be too flexible. I have to be in the lab to do my work. I have to get my hands on things*). This finding supports the work of Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden (2013) who have suggested that many STEM trainees feel pressure to put in long hours in the laboratory to produce publishable findings—presumably to help secure publications and future grant funding for their supervisors and, by extension, themselves. In my study, the notable exception to this STEM work environment requirement was Scarlett, who was able to complete a significant portion of her work off-campus using remote desktop technology. Indeed, such opportunities for 'telecommuting' (i.e. using the internet to work from home) have been found to potentially make the management of work and life significantly easier for workers in many industries, including academia (Heijstra & Rafnsdottir, 2010). However, further research into the specific benefits telecommuting could provide to trainees is likely warranted.

Amongst the remainder of the doctoral and postdoctoral trainee participants (which were drawn from humanities and social science disciplines), there was a greater degree of research-

related flexibility reported. Much like the findings described by Asselin (2008), Evans and Grant (2009), and Lynch (2002), several of these trainee participants specifically described enjoying their ability to work from home when they wanted and/or needed to, as well as their capacity to largely structure their work and leisure schedules as they pleased (e.g. Penelope: *I'm flexible. I don't have to go to school if I don't want to most of the time. If something comes up I can call and say, "sorry, something came up"*; Jake: *I feel grateful for the flexibility that I've had with my studies.... I don't have somebody looking over my shoulder wondering why I'm not at my desk... someone who expects you to be there for certain times*; Emma: *I'll work from home from 6 to 11 a.m. and then go out for a run*). Such flexibility was often only possible because the trainees conducted research that did not always require them to be on campus. However, it should be noted that several were required to collect their data through field work—a scenario that can result in a more rigid schedule for a time. Fortunately for these humanities and social sciences trainees, flexibility with regard to one's schedule and place of work has been found to be immensely valuable for junior academics (particularly those with children) seeking to establish healthier work/life management patterns (Asselin, 2008; Eyre-White, 2009; Lynch, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

7.2.3 Stage of Training

The trainee participants involved with my study spanned a broad range of stages in their training—from the first year of doctoral studies to the fourth year of postdoctoral work. As such, their narratives provide insight into the ways their experiences and the expectations placed on them could change over time. Amongst the doctoral trainee participants (from STEM, social science, and humanities disciplines), those in their first and second year largely reported being engaged in coursework and preparation for their comprehensive exams. Thus, unlike their upper year doctoral counterparts, their schedules were more inflexible (e.g. Scarlett: *I've gotten most of my coursework out of the way, which does make my time more flexible*), their presence on campus was more essential (e.g. Curtis: *once I'm done my coursework this semester, I can do all the work I want from home*), and their leisure time was often more curtailed (e.g. Ella: *it's like, "hey, I haven't seen you for a while. You want to come and hang out with me?"* Curtis will often say *"I have homework to do"*). These findings suggest that the early doctorate years may be a less ideal time for many individuals to take on

additional personal responsibilities (Asselin, 2008; Eyre-White, 2009; Lynch, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Unlike the doctoral trainees who frequently described certainty with regard to their stipend funding (e.g. Divya: *I am funded for four years no matter what happens*), the postdoctoral trainees appeared less certain about the longer term security of their positions (e.g. Divya: *I have seen that postdoc life is also okay...but there is no financial or job security in that time. That's a big deal*). This particular finding backs those of previous studies that have described the postdoctoral period as a highly competitive training stage where one's position can depend largely on the attainment of external funding and publications (Goh, 2008; Nelson, 2004).

Whilst the postdoctoral trainees in my study had already completed a large amount of academic training, there was evidence that some still viewed themselves as having something to prove professionally (e.g. Emma: *I 'm sort of the bottom of the faculty pecking order because as a postdoc, I am faculty but I'm not full faculty*). As a result, they occasionally felt the need to work long hours to achieve success and prove their worth as researchers. This finding supports work by Goh (2008) and Chen, McAlpine and Amundsen (2015) who have reported postdoctoral trainees working long workdays and weekends to get ahead, sometimes cutting into time that could be spent with family or on leisure activities. However, given the relatively small postdoctoral trainee participant group recruited for my study (i.e. three), more extensive and in-depth research into the professional and personal lives of this trainee population is needed to further verify this claim. Having now discussed several of the important training aspects uncovered in my study, I will shift my focus to an exploration of the relationships between trainees and their partners.

7.3 Trainee Intimate Partner Relationships

Given the stresses often present for those undertaking academic training, it seems logical that trainees would likely want to seek out support to assist with the management of this process. While such support can be derived at an institutional level through university policies and programs (Austin, 2002), at a more direct level through supervisors (Maxwell & Smyth, 2011; Moxham, Dwyer & Reid-Searl, 2013), or at a more personal level through

peers, friends, or family (Buissink-Smith & Hart, 2013; Jairam & Khal, 2012), intimate partners have been found to be one of the most vital sources of comfort and encouragement for trainees (Jairam & Khal, 2012). Indeed, it has been suggested by Devonport and Lane (2014) that the support derived from a partner can not only help a trainee to achieve their academic goals, but may also allow them to enjoy the experience along the way (e.g. Scarlett: *I couldn't imagine doing life without [my husband] at this point. I know a lot of people go through school without a partner, but I just feel like it could get very lonely*). In this section, I unpack the important roles that trainee intimate partners in my research played in the training process (i.e. dyadic stress management and support), as well as the social connections and adaptation process experienced by relocated trainee spouses. I then end with a brief exploration of the shared experience of academic training that was found to exist between several of the participant couples.

7.3.1 Dyadic Stress Management

Carter and McGoldrick (2005) have proposed that academic training is a stressful undertaking that is not only experienced by trainees, but also by their intimate partners and families. Consequently, doctoral and/or postdoctoral training could be described as a ‘family task’ that requires both partners on board with the commitments (Brannock, Litten & Smith, 2000), investments, and potential sacrifices involved—often through a process called dyadic stress management. Dyadic stresses, generally thought of as events that directly and/or indirectly threaten two closely tied individuals (e.g. intimate partners, friends, family members), typically require both parties not only to respond, but also to maintain their relationship whilst doing so (Bodenmann, 2005; Berg & Upchurch, 2007; Revenson, 2003).

Among the participants in my study, the notion of academic training as a dyadic stress experienced by both partners was often present and demonstrated in a variety of ways. For example, trainees at times recounted stories of stress related to their busy working schedules, in addition to a lack of time for leisure (i.e. a direct stressor related to their training). Their significant others, conversely, described feeling a sense of loneliness related to being new to a city with a partner who was frequently occupied with academic work (i.e. an indirect consequence of the direct training stressor). Alternatively, both partners sometimes expressed

experiences of worry related to their limited financial resources (i.e. a direct stressor often tied to graduate stipends or the unemployment of a newly relocated spouse) or concerns about how they might manage childcare if they were to become parents (i.e. an indirect stressor related to finances or a lack of family living nearby). In all these instances, both partners were found to experience the stress effects of academic training (though not always in the same ways) and, if their relationship was to stay intact, had to find ways to manage the stressor as a unit.

This co-management of a mutually experienced stress was found to begin early for several of the participants—sometimes even before they had accepted a training offer. For instance, several of the doctoral trainee intimate partners described being consulted about their thoughts on graduate school before their significant other had decided to enroll (e.g. Ella: *[Curtis] came to a crossroads and he was like, “oh I don't know what I should do. What should I do?” I was like “go for the PhD”*; Larissa: *knowing that Jason wanted to do a PhD and pursue his education, I was like 'go for it'*). In these cases, having the endorsement of a partner may have provided trainees with a sense that their academic aspirations were understood and would, more than likely, be supported moving forward. Having this type of mutual understanding may have also avoided some of the relationship conflicts that can result when couples hold disparate opinions on a significant undertaking (Jairam & Khal, 2012). Furthermore, it has been suggested that when couples take each other's feelings, desires, and well-being into consideration when confronted with a stressor, they have a better likelihood of successfully managing as a dyad (Fuenfhausen & Cashwell, 2013).

7.3.2 Offering Support

In the latter years of his career, prominent stress coping researcher Richard Lazarus decided to honour the support his wife had provided, as well as the sacrifices she had made for his career in a most unique way—by listing her as a co-author of one of his books (Lazarus & Lazarus, 2006). Indeed, Lazarus contended that his wife's support had not only freed him of day-to-day stresses (thus allowing him more time to devote to his work), but had also been extremely influential to his thinking and argument construction. His small but telling action, however, shines light on the invaluable role intimate partner support plays in the lives and careers of academics.

While I acknowledge that support can certainly exist in a variety of forms, studies examining academic trainees stress coping have discovered that practical and emotional supports are among the most common offered by intimate partners (Berg & Upchurch, 2007). Indeed, examples of both of these types of supports were evident in the participant narratives within my study. Practical supports on the part of partners for the trainees, for instance, were found to take the form of financial support (e.g. working a full-time or part-time job to help supplement a trainee income), helping out with chores around the home (e.g. Vivian: *Peter's been—like usually he does dishes and I do cooking... but lately he's been doing all of it because I just don't have time*) and providing gifts of time or care (e.g. Scarlett: *he'll bring me dinners at the office if I need them and he knows that if something is coming up*; Eli: *if she has to pull an all-nighter because a professor needs work tomorrow, I stay up with her and make sure there's coffee and snacks*; Ella: *I'm just like, "okay, better leave him alone...don't be distracting him" because I know what it was like being a student*). These types of practical supports likely allowed the trainees' to devote their full time and attention to their work and, arguably, may have also helped to boost their academic productivity (Jairam & Kahl, 2012; Lazarus & Lazarus, 2006). Unfortunately, these supports also required certain relationship sacrifices on the part of the trainee partner (particularly related to the amount of time they were able to spend with their partner), a finding that echoes those of Devonport and Lane (2014) in their work/life management research among two doctoral couples.

With regard to returning these types of practical support efforts, the trainees were found to share household chores or take them over completely when their partner was ill, as was the case with Jake and Maryann in the first semester of her pregnancy. It should be noted, however, that these efforts typically occurred on a relatively infrequent basis. The arguable lopsidedness of this support reciprocity, therefore, suggests that dyadic stress management within trainee couples may require greater efforts on the part of the non-trainee partner. Additionally, a situation where one partner is providing a disproportionate amount of practical support could be said to create unique challenges for dual trainee couples—especially surrounding household chores—and could result in task management falling down traditional gender lines (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Shaw & Henderson, 2005; Wearing, 1990). This was certainly

found to be the case in my study amongst trainees Emma and Divya, who reported performing the bulk of the day-to-day household tasks in their relationships.

While emotional supports were slightly less tangible within the participant narratives and were frequently described largely in broad terms (e.g. Vivian: *Peter's always been extremely, extremely, supportive*; Scarlett: *he's really supportive*; Eli: *I try to support her*; Peter: *I want to just kind of help her through those priorities*), they appeared no less important than practical assistance, in that that they allowed the trainees to feel understood and cared for during periods of stress (Berg & Upchurch, 2007). James, for example, provided one of the most concrete examples of emotional support among the trainee partners when he described going to great lengths to ensure that Sophia had the emotional encouragement she required (e.g. *when I'm in her realm, I really try to open myself up and understand. I think it kind of helps me understand her life and the things that she's going through... I tell her "you have to be careful...you don't want to take on the world"*). His suggestion that providing emotional support allowed him to become *a better person, a better partner* also speaks to the powerful positive effects dyadic stress management strategies can have on intimate relationships (Bodenmann, Pinet & Kayser, 2006). Indeed, these authors have suggested that co-management of stresses may help to build trust, intimacy, and a general feeling of support between partners, potentially leading to stronger and more lasting relationships.

The academic trainees in my study were also found to return emotional support to their partners through concerns about their partner's emotional and psychological well-being (e.g. Curtis worrying that Ella needed to make friends and build an external support network; Jason finding an international trainee spouse support group for Larissa), as well as providing their partners with the sense that they were important (e.g. Scarlett: *I really try to convey to him that he's a priority*). Overall, the nature and timing of these emotional supports (in addition to the ones provided by the trainee partners) denote the importance not only of support variety, but also the ability of the provider to ascertain when certain supports might be most needed (e.g. providing a sounding board for discussing stress when a trainee has a stressful deadline approaching; finding a peer group for an intimate partner to help deal with homesickness in the first few months after relocating). Indeed, authors such as Reblin and Uchino (2008) and Berkman (1995) have reported that trainees who receive the support they need, when they

need it, and on a frequent basis describe reduced levels of stress compared to individuals who received inappropriate, ill-timed, or infrequent support. The same could likely be said for the nature, timing, and regularity of support provided to trainee partners.

7.3.3 Social Connections and Adaptation

As is often the case in academia, academic trainees must sometimes relocate for the purposes of training or to take up a faculty position following its completion (Giordano, Davis & Licht, 2012). If these trainees are in committed relationships, their training choices may also require their partner to relocate along with them. In the early 1980s, a New York Times article was one of the first to bring attention to the stresses experienced by relocated partners—termed ‘trailing spouses’—in instances where they were required to move for the purpose of their spouse’s work commitments (Bralove, 1981). Historically, trailing spouses have predominately been women (Bralove, 1981), largely because female partners were either not employed outside the home or were not the primary breadwinners for their families. However, recent research has suggested that as more women have become the main/co-earners in their families, the trailing spouse population has grown to include an increased percentage of men (Bernard, 2014). In my research, three trailing spouses were identified and included two women (Larissa and Ella, both from the United States) and one man (Peter, from another province), thus supporting the idea that trailing spouses can be drawn from either sex (Bernard, 2014).

Much like the individuals interviewed by Bralove (1981) and Bernard (2014), the three trailing trainee spouses in my study experienced challenges associated with their relocation. These included, but were not limited to, the need to adapt to a different or larger community size (e.g. Peter: *I didn't know anything about this city when I moved here*), a different religious community structure (e.g. Ella moving from a largely Mormon community to one that had only one Mormon church), an unfamiliar health insurance system, and a higher cost of living. This unfamiliarity with regard to their new surroundings, combined with an increased distance from familiar sources of social support (e.g. friends and family) sometimes created feeling of homesickness amongst the trainee partners (e.g. Larissa: *I was a little scared of course, at first, because I didn't have any family or friends here*) and fueled a general sentiment that the

transition to a new community could be difficult (e.g. Larissa: *I struggled when we first got here*; Peter: *I kind of struggled actually*). These findings echo those reported by Yellig (2011) in her work exploring the social transitions of international trainee spouses; however, it should be acknowledged that the participants in my study did not face language or dramatic cultural barriers along with their moves. Indeed, such obstacles have been found to make the process of acclimating to a new community and forging new social connections more difficult for trainee partners and can contribute to increased feelings of social isolation (Yellig, 2011).

For trainees studying abroad, the relationship with an intimate partner has been found to be one of the most important from a social well-being perspective, as this individual can act as a tether to familiar cultural and/or lifestyle experiences (Rains, 2015). While the reverse case is certainly also logical (i.e. trainees can be an extremely important connection for their partners), it could be suggested that this intimate partner connection is even more essential for trailing spouses, as they frequently do not have immediate access to paid work as a venue for establishing connections with others. This was found to be case for several of the couples in my study who reported that the trainee partner often had an instant peer group whilst the trailing spouse faced challenges making friends (e.g. Larissa: *it's different for Jason as a student, because he's got his classmates...he has that interaction. I didn't even have a job at first, so it was a bit harder*; Curtis: *having [my trainee] network was nice and then they had girlfriends, so Ella also had somebody that was going through the same thing*. She doesn't have that here yet). As a result, some trainee partners reported feeling lonely and socially isolated following their relocation (e.g. Larissa: *it can be lonely*).

For newcomer trailing partners, one method of mitigating feelings of isolation is by establishing social ties through engagement in purposeful activities (Rains, 2015). While these activities can take the form of paid work, as was found to be the case for a few of the participants in my research (e.g. Larissa finding work in the business field; Ella: *it's a bit easier that I work part-time during the day or else I'd go crazy*), leisure outlets have also been suggested to be effective avenues for purposeful social contact (Rains, 2015). Within my study, both spontaneous leisure (e.g. going shopping to meet people) and organized social gatherings (e.g. joining a book club) were described as activities that allowed the trainee partners to socialize. However, it would appear that leisure opportunities within the academic

institution were some of the more effective avenues for establishing connections with others, particularly in the period right after relocation. These social leisure outlets included more formalized experiences (e.g. Larissa: *I joined the international spouses organization and I met a girl from the States as well. We've been friends ever since then*), as well as impromptu and/or informal social encounters (e.g. Ella: *when I got here I was literally watching my neighbours [in my international student housing complex] to make sure if somebody was coming outside, I'd be like, "hey, how it's going? I need a friend"*). Through these leisure encounters, the trainee partners were able to forge connections with other spouses in similar circumstances and often found much needed peer support (Lipson, 2008).

7.3.4 Shared Understanding of Academic Training

Within my research, the couples with a shared understanding of the challenges involved with academic training appeared to benefit most from the process of dyadic stress coping. For some couples, this meant having a partner who was also a trainee and likely possessed a learned understanding of the professional demands placed on the other's time (e.g. Anish: *Divya already had some experience and exposure towards [the PhD and postdoctoral life] too; Edward: I don't think somebody has to have a PhD to understand, but it certainly increases the likelihood that they will; Penelope and Louis: one of the main reasons why we were attracted to each other was because we both valued education and knowledge and were both going to university*). Such understanding has been found to be a useful stress coping resource within trainee couples, particularly if the individuals involved have a similar disciplinary background, or if one partner has already gone through certain academic stresses (e.g. comprehensive exams or dissertation defenses) and can provide informed advice to the other (Leggett, Roberts-Pittman, Byczek & Morse, 2012).

The general health of the participants' intimate relationships may have also benefited from their shared desires and ambitions related to academic training (e.g. Divya: *I really wanted a guy who was in a PhD so that he could understand my desire; Anish: maybe we had more of a chance to move forward and manage together with our shared way of understanding. That's very important, otherwise it wouldn't be easy to go into her bed*). Indeed, within the dual trainee partnerships in my study, there was frequently a mutual

acceptance about a partner's work schedule, high stress levels, or research fixation, as both parties understood the commitments involved with the process. This finding is supported by previous work that has found that couples comprised of two graduate student partners report increased levels of marital satisfaction compared to couples who contain only one graduate student (Brannock, Litten & Smith, 2000).

Interestingly, there was evidence in my study that despite a shared understanding of aspects of academic training, a divergence with regard to ambitions could create discord within a couple (Brannock, Litten, Smith, 2000). Louis and Penelope, for example, had both pursued a master's degree together, but had gone their separate ways academically when Penelope had chosen to pursue a PhD. As a consequence, Louis reported feeling somewhat 'left behind' intellectually as his wife delved into deep theoretical concepts in her research and coursework:

Sometimes deciding not to do a PhD has started to make me have a little bit of an inferiority complex. It's not like it's really bothering me—it's just that sometimes when Penelope and I are talking about things, I have started to feel like I'm not keeping up as much as I was before (Louis)

Indeed, previous work has reported that graduate studies has the potential to shift individual philosophies and approaches to life and, thus, can pose a threat to the health of intimate relationships within trainee couples (Brannock, Litten, Smith, 2000; Gold, 2006). Therefore, it would be advisable for trainee couples to find ways to connect and build understanding—both inside and outside their work endeavours.

While shared experiences of academic training created a level of understanding between some couples, one couple (Sophia and James) had found that a shared commitment to their current 'career' was beneficial to their relationship (Sophia: *James found attraction in my commitment to my work...[he] is a workaholic so he respected that about me. He doesn't really work a 9 to 5 either; James: as long as you're able to support one another and understand one another, then I don't think there should be any limits on who you date or who you end up marrying*). While this shared dedication to long work hours and a largely singular work focus could help to prevent some disagreements within this couple concerning time and attention resources, it could be argued that their shared workaholic tendencies could also lead

to well-being issues in the future, both for them individually and as a couple. Alternatively, this couple (in addition to the partnerships who contained two trainees) could also be at risk for a phenomenon called stress contagion, whereby an individual can become stressed or have pre-existing stress(es) fed by exposure to the stress(es) of a closely related individual (Ringeisen & Buchwald, 2006). Consequently, it would likely be advisable for trainees and their partners to ensure that they are taking time away from their work to reduce their levels of stress and improve their overall well-being.

7.4 Trainee Couple Family Planning

Given the extremely complex personal, academic, and relational lives of the participants in my research, it made logical sense to find that their decision-making surrounding parenthood was equally complicated and multifaceted. Consequently, this subsection will engage in a thorough exploration of these narrative content areas. I begin with a probe into the general, gendered, and shared desires that were motivating the participant couples to want to pursue parenthood—a significant life-altering endeavour—in the first place. Following this, I unpack the traditional and non-traditional roles that the male and the female participants occupied within their households. This particular area of discussion not only highlights how traditional gender roles might impact the ways the trainee couples could manage future life with a child, but also lays the groundwork for a dissection of the gendered and shared pressures that the couples encountered related to family planning (e.g. pronatalist pressures, patriarchal gender roles within the family, religious pressures related to marriage, intensive mothering practices). Having explored many of the factors driving their thinking forward, I shift gears and expose some of the factors that were constraining the participants' decision-making. Lastly, I uncover some of the supports that could assist trainees and their partners in the concurrent management of training and family life.

I feel it is also important to acknowledge that the critical discussion in this subsection speaks predominately to the experiences, gendered roles, pressures, and constraints placed on heterosexual individuals and couples. As a result, it fails to address some elements of intersectionality that exist for many parents—mainly, sexual identity. As Patterson and Riskind (2010) have suggested, parenthood has historically been considered the “exclusive

prerogative of heterosexual people” and a normalized extension of heterosexual marriage (pp. 326). While social progress and changing attitudes have seen greater numbers of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans individuals choosing to become parents (via egg/sperm donors, surrogacy, adoption), my study failed to recruit any participant couples with these sexual or gender identities. As a result, I was unable to explore the nuances that might exist in the family planning process for academic trainees from these groups. I consider this to be a limitation of my study that will be discussed in greater detail in my conclusion chapter.

7.4.1 Desires and Motivations

To breed or not to breed? This is, without a doubt, one of the most significant decisions that individuals and/or couples will face over the course of their lives (Leibovich, 2006). Amongst the participants in my study, the question of whether an individual and/or couple wanted children was, arguably, already solidified; however, there were a few individuals still oscillating in their decision-making. The deeper desires behind why each individual and/or couple was considering children, however, proved to be multidimensional, socially influenced, and in many instances, gendered. What the participants were able to demonstrate through their stories on a larger level was a sense that their motivators—as trainees and trainee partners—were similar to those professed by many other individuals in our society.

7.4.1.1 General Expressions

My research found that certain individual parenthood desires were experienced by both men and women, arguably making them more ‘general’ (as opposed to ‘gendered’) in nature. For example, both male and female participants described the promise of positive interactions with their future children as being a powerful motivator for parenthood. In particular, the opportunities to nurture (e.g. Eli: *A child is just something I believe will help fulfill my desire to nurture and look after somebody*; Edward: *I want to take care of them. That's part of the point of having a family for me*), create a bond with (e.g. Eli: *build the bond with my child*), shape (e.g. Emma: *the idea of shaping a person is also pretty exciting*), and emotionally support a child (e.g. Maryann: *a little person that you support and guide them through things*) proved to be particularly enticing. Many of these motivators have also been salient in previous

family planning literature, although they are often presented through a gendered lens. For example, Dienhart (1998), Gatrell (2006), and Shaw (2008) have reported that men's desires to bond with future children may be a significant influencer with regard to fatherhood, while Bergum (1997) and Birch-Petersen et al. (2016) have discussed many women's desires to nurture a child as being one of their main drivers for motherhood. My study, however, supports the idea that certain desires surrounding parenthood might be experienced by both men and women.

Additionally, study participants from both genders reported that a perceived 'urge' to have a child was impacting their decision-making (e.g. *Ella: I don't really want to wait. I know my biological clock is going off*). This was an intriguing finding, given the strong cultural associations that this parenthood motivator has historically held with women in our society (Birch-Petersen et al., 2016; Evans & Grant, 2009; Friese, Becker & Nachtigall, 2006; Orenstein, 2007; Rijke & Knijn, 2009). I would maintain, however, that the women's narrative quotes conveyed more of a visceral component to their experiences (i.e. reference to the biological), while the men's suggested more of a psychological urge. This observation is supported by a 2011 study by Miettinen, Basten and Rotkirch that explored Finish men's and women's experiences of longing with regard to children. These investigators found 44% of the male respondents reporting at least one experience of longing for a child during their lifetimes (compared to 50% of female respondents); although, the men reported experiencing this feeling less frequently and with less physical intensity than the female respondents.

Discussions about longing also beg the question: what is a couple to do when one partner longs for a family more than the other? This was found to be the case for three of the couples in my study who reported one partner being more eager to have a child, or expressing a desire to have children sooner than the other. Research by Lupton and Barclay (1997) and Miettinen, Basten and Rotkirch (2011) has suggested that, amongst heterosexual couples, the male partner is the more likely individual to experience reservations and defer to the family planning desires of his partner (e.g. *Louis: a big thing for me is how strongly [Penelope] felt like we should start trying now; Jason: Larissa, she is older than me, so she's been wanting to have kids for a long time*). My study, however, also found women occupying this deference role. Emma and Vivian, for example, referenced their awareness of their partner's family

desires, but also articulated their own reluctances surrounding motherhood (e.g. Emma: *I oscillate significantly between being sort of so frustrated that I can't have the children [because I am busy]...to not really being sure that this is even something that I want*; Vivian: *I just wanted to do my own thing. I didn't want to be tied down*). While these women reported that their reservations could have been, at least in part, motivated by their research (e.g. Vivian's concerns about the future of the planet) and/or their leisure pursuits (e.g. Emma's serious running hobby), it is important to acknowledge that both were also trainees juggling busy schedules. Consequently, their educational experience may have created some uncertainty about how the demands of a child might impact their training in the future. This is a very real concern for many female academics that has been reported extensively in the literature (Castaneda & Isgro, 2013; Connelly & Ghodsee, 2011; Evans & Grant, 2008; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2015). Given that both women were seriously contemplating becoming pregnant at the time of our interviews, it is arguable that their partner's clear desires for family had been strong enough to overcome the women's initial reluctance—the gender reverse of the findings reported by Lupton and Barclay (1997) and Miettinen, Basten and Rotkirch (2011).

7.4.1.2 Women's Expressions

In addition to these general desires, my research also uncovered separate motivators occurring only among women. This is arguably an unsurprising finding, given the strong emphasis historically placed on motherhood in our society as a defining role for women (Cassidy, 2006; Jordan & Revenson, 1999). In particular, several female participants described the ways they prioritized the pursuit of children in the context of their lives. For some, this priority pre-dated their relationship with their partner (e.g. Sophia: *family was very important to me so if James didn't want a family, then I would have had to either convince him or leave—right*), suggesting that motherhood was an important long term goal that some of the women were working towards—sometimes on top of academic training.

For several of the other female participants, motherhood had been a role they had only seriously considered after meeting their current intimate partners (e.g. Maryann: *[motherhood is] something that I've grown into wanting. I think it was more something that was kind of*

solidified in my mind when I met Jake). Specifically, the women's family planning desires appeared to be triggered by them finding a partner they thought would make a good father and/or them cultivating an intimate relationship that they found positive and supportive (e.g. Penelope: *so once we worked through some of that and created this very loving and supportive relationship, it switched. I started to feel like this was the person...who I wanted to have a child with*). These findings are consistent with previous research has found that the status and stability of a woman's intimate relationship may play a significant role in her family planning desires (Gray, Evans & Reimondos, 2013).

Finally, the desire to have a child that was a genetic mixture of oneself and one's partner was also briefly mentioned by one participant as a motivator for planning a family (e.g. Vivian: Peter's response was *"I just want more of you in the world"*. *So then I thought about it and said "I want more of you in the world too*). This finding mirrors those reported previously by Dell and Erem (2004) in their examination of women's motherhood desires.

7.4.1.3 Men's Expressions

Given that the factors influencing men's decision-making process surrounding parenthood have historically been much less investigated (when compared to those of women), my research was able to add some important detail and corroboration to existing research in this area. Through their narratives, the male participants were able to convey clear reasoning behind their desires to want to become fathers, thus helping to further break down some of the vagueness surrounding men's fatherhood motivations that has existed previously (Peterson & Jenni, 2003). One of the most prominent drivers described by the men was a desire to pursue fatherhood as an avenue for embracing change within the context of their lives. This aspiration was found to manifest in discussion about parenthood as a life goal (e.g. James: *I always said I would have kids by 30. It was a life goal*), as a catalyst for viewing the world differently (e.g. Eli: *I want to see the world through somebody else's eyes*), and as a reason to restructure one's priorities in life around another person (e.g. Edward: *I mean my child is my priority*; Louis: *it would be great to have another focus around which we could plan our lives together*). For these men, fatherhood was viewed as a potential venue for personal growth and as a justification to step outside of themselves for the sake of another

(Kay, 2007; Marsiglio, Hutchinson & Cohan, 2000; Peterson & Jenni, 2003). However, my study also found a female participant reporting parenthood as a welcomed vector for creating personal change (e.g. Ella: *I also feel like when you have kids, you continue to increase and grow...I just want to be someone different*), suggesting that this desire could potentially apply to women as well.

Although it was only mentioned by a few of the participants, my research also found evidence that some men viewed the ability to leave behind a legacy as an important motivator for fatherhood (e.g. Edward: *when I die, I'm gone. So what I leave is my kids*; Peter: *a lot of men are concerned about their legacy*), a finding that supports work by Hirschman (2016). This legacy did not necessarily involve simply continuing a family name (as has been mentioned by Hirschman), but related more to a desire to mold another individual as an embodiment of one's values, attitudes, and actions. For example, Edward's narrative conveyed a personal approach to life that revolved around independent thinking and stepping up to one's responsibilities. Consequently, his statement *I want to make sure that [my child] can stand on their own two feet, make sure they know how to make a hard decision rather than an easy decision* could be interpreted as his desire to want to shape his child to personify these traits. This notion is supported by research findings by Finn and Henwood (2009), as well as Coltart and Henwood (2012), who have suggested that men's family planning may be motivated by a desire to pass on positive attributes to their children.

While I acknowledge that one's worldview, experiences, and beliefs almost certainly play a part in the way individuals parent a child, I contend that this notion of legacy could run deeper for some men, who may view their children not as individuals, but as extensions of themselves (Hirschman, 2016). This interpretation is supported by the reflections of another study participant, Peter, who implied that some men's desires to leave a legacy may have more self-centered—as opposed to self-sacrificing—undertones (e.g. *you can really see it if you watch how men treat their kids; whether they treat them like people or just mini-versions of themselves*). This sentiment echoes the findings of Hirschman (2016) who reported that the self-interests of some fathers to leave a legacy can, at times, override a child's potential future interests (e.g. being born into a family where they are wanted or where their basic needs can be met).

The historically patriarchal practice of men passing on property to male genetic heirs could be argued to be an early contributor to men's desires to want to pass on traits and leave a legacy, in that historically men were often interested in ensuring that their assets remained within their families and continued to bear their name (Priyam, Manon & Banerjee, 2009). On a deeper level, however, we could view these strategies as a way for men to pass on some of their privilege to future generations—particularly if their children are male.

Finally, a few of the male participants in my study conveyed a desire to change the legacy that was left to them by their own parents—that is, they wanted to not follow in their parent's footsteps with the way they parented their children. Thus, it could be suggested that these men wanted to channel some of the negative feelings from their own childhoods into the creation of a more positive family experience for the next generation. This provides further evidence for the claim that men may see fatherhood as a vector for change (Peterson & Jenni, 2003). One example of this desire was Jason's description of wanting to wait until he and Larissa were financially stable before having children to avoid the financial hardships he had experienced growing up. Additionally, Louis—who had spent part of his childhood on a different continent from his mother while she finished her doctorate—described his desire to 'do better' by his own future children as a major motivator to pursue fatherhood. This finding supports previous research that has proposed that individuals may seek out parenthood as a way to make up for what was lacking in their own childhoods (Dell & Erem, 2004; Rijken & Knijn, 2009). It is important, however, to also note that these studies did not imply that such a sentiment was overtly gendered. Consequently, the findings from my study suggest further exploration into the ways men's (and perhaps also women's) parenting desires may be impacted by their wish to 'do better' by their own children.

7.4.1.4 Shared Expressions

While generalized and gendered desires were discussed on an individual level by participants, evidence of a shared desire for a child within the couples was also found to exist. In these instances, individual desires (conveyed through words like 'I' or 'my') were largely invisible, having been replaced by a type of "oneness talk" (conveyed through words like 'we' or 'us') that implied that each partner shared responsibility in the decision-making process

(Dixon & Wetherell, 2004, pp. 176). Examples of this oneness talk included mention of children being an early point of discussion in a relationship (e.g. Larissa: *even when we were first dating, we had talked about kids and family and values and all that stuff*), a likely component of partnered life in the future (e.g. Yaser: *we really thought that eventually we would have children. So we said “okay, there is no other excuse to postpone this”*), or as an evolving point of discussion over time (e.g. Scarlett and Eli: *it was a discussion that had been going on between us for a long time....we discussed it and, you know, kind of aired out the idea*). This shared approach to thinking was found to be particularly evident (and arguably more comprehensive in its scope) amongst the couples who were already pregnant, signifying that these individuals had likely engaged in more in-depth discussion with one another than those couples who were merely thinking about starting a family.

One incidental shared desire that appeared in interviews with two of the international trainee couples (i.e. Larissa and Jason; Zhara and Yaser) was the notion of citizenship for a future child. Discussions about this desire typically conveyed that it would be advantageous for a youngster to be born in Canada to allow him or her to hold dual citizenship. Particularly for a trainee couple coming from a country where it can be difficult to obtain a travel visa (e.g. Yaser and Zhara’s homeland of Iran), there was also a shared sense that a Canadian-born child could make the process of returning to Canada more straightforward. This couple also referenced acquaintances who had engaged in this same birthplace strategizing, implying that it may not be an uncommon practice among international trainee couples. Unfortunately, citizenship-related motivations for parenthood amongst academic trainees have not been well investigated within the literature, indicating that this may be an interesting area for future investigation.

7.4.2 Roles within the Family

In a 2013 Psychology Today article exploring gender roles within heterosexual, married couples, anxiety specialist Dr. Fredric Neuman offered the following:

The current, commonly agreed, “politically correct” plan for marriage is an equal sharing of chores and other duties; but this plan is not followed now any more than it has been throughout history... although there is a division of labor in human affairs between the sexes, there are changing social expectations, which are reflected in somewhat different gender roles at different times. When I grew up, fathers were

employed out of the home, and mothers tended to the household. That meant not only housekeeping but taking primary responsibility for child upbringing. Now things are different. Most mothers work. Household responsibilities must be shared. But they are not shared equally. (paragraph 1 and 2)

Within this statement, Neuman covers a lot of politically charged ground with regard to gendered roles within the family. Not only does he explore the historically delegated responsibilities for men and women in our society, but he also addresses the ways traditional gender roles are being reinforced, challenged, and potentially renegotiated within today's North American intimate partnerships. Amongst the participant group in my research, traditional and non-traditional gender roles, in addition to shared roles within a family were all found to exist.

7.4.2.1 Women's Roles

To begin, three of the female trainees in my research vocalized their experiences with the second shift phenomenon first outlined by Hochschild (1989), particularly with regard to household chores. This is not to say that other female participants (trainees or partners) did not also mention chore work, but for these three women, this role within the home appeared significant. For example, Divya described completing long days/weeks of paid work on campus, only to return home to complete housework. While she described that her husband might *help sometimes* (largely with jobs that were physically demanding), it was clear that Divya felt that these activities were her second 'job' (Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

Alternatively, trainees Sophia and Emma described being the only partner in their households concerned with chore work, often causing them to feel responsible for its completion and/or delegation. Unfortunately, such concerns about the uneven distribution of household labour between heterosexual partners have been voiced for decades (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Friedan, 1993; Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Marshall & Anderson, 1994), thus implying that this is a persistent labour issue within intimate partnerships. On a deeper level, such divisions of labour also reinforce the enduring nature of patriarchal gender roles within the family that frequently devalue or disempower women and their work.

The more recent phenomenon, however, of women entering paid work outside the home (which could include academic training) has created a situation whereby many women feel responsible for co-managing labour in both the public and private spheres of life. Consequently, women (including those in my study) are now reporting that their hours in the day are spread quite thin, an unfortunate side effect of engagement in the second shift (Goodin, Rice, Bittman & Saunders, 2005; Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Such a situation can place women at risk not only for interpersonal conflict within their intimate relationships (e.g. feelings of frustration that chores are not divided equally), but may also contribute to them having less time to engage in leisure activities in addition to their work (Hilbrecht, 2013; Samdahl, 2013; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996).

Hochschild's research from her 1989 publication not only included housework in the tasks associated with women's labour, but also care work associated with family. The author has since referred to such care work as 'emotional labour' and found that it was often extensive enough to comprise a third shift of duties for women within the home (Hochschild, 1997). Indeed, such care is yet another type of unpaid labour traditionally completed by women with strong ties to a feminist ethic of care—an ideology which believes care work has been engendered in women and, as a result, devalued (Gilligan, 1982; O'Reilly, 2010; 2012; Rich, 1976). Within my study, several of the female participants specifically described their perceived responsibility for various forms of emotional labour that included caring for one's intimate partner (e.g. Divya: *I have to take care of my husband, my home*; Zhara: *I think it's more important for women to pay attention to their husbands*), caring for an elderly parent (Sophia: *it's challenging to support my mom (who is aging) and to balance a busy schedule at home*), caring for disadvantaged extended family (e.g. Divya: *I'm also taking care of my family and I'm taking care of my husband's family by having funds for things*), and potentially caring for future children (Emma: *I worry if we have kids, even if Edward says "I'll do most of the work", I will just swoop in there and say "well I have to because it's my responsibility because I'm the mom"*).

A closer look at the language chosen by several of the women in these narrative quotes hints at their sense of personal obligation for this care work (e.g. *I have to; it's my responsibility; should*). This observation supports work by O'Reilly (2010; 2012), Rich

(1976) and Risman (2004) who have suggested that women may feel that it is their moral duty to tend to the needs of others. It is important to also take notice of the idea that some of the care responsibilities described by the participants (particularly those associated with parents or extended family) have the potential to create a third shift of work for the women should they become mothers in the future (Bolton, 2000; Hochschild, 1997). This would almost certainly exacerbate the demands placed on an already busy schedule.

For two of the women in particular (i.e. Divya and Zhara), there was a recognition that their cultural backgrounds (i.e. South Indian and Iranian, respectively) may have shaped their ways of thinking about family and care work. Both, however, perceived their own culture's dominant messaging about women and care labour as being different than what was commonly promoted in Canadian society (e.g. Divya: *I don't think anybody in my lab is doing this kind of schedule at home; Zhara: maybe in Canada, I'm not sure but I think they are a little different*). This is an interesting finding given the well-reported emphasis placed on North American women to sacrifice their own wants and needs for the needs of others (Jordan & Revenson, 1999; Nuttbrock & Freudinger, 1991; O'Reilly, 2010; 2012; Rich, 1977). Consequently, Divya and Zhara's sentiments speak to the possibility that that certain care expectations placed on women/mothers may cross cultural and geographic borders.

7.4.2.2 Men's Roles

Separate from the female reported roles within the family were those occupied by their male partners, which included men acting as the primary financial providers for their families (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Feldman & Nash, 1984). Interestingly, the male participants who discussed this provider role expectation were often able to trace it back to formative sources of influence, thus providing some useful insight into the specific areas where men may experience gender socialization (Coltrane, 1998). Curtis, for example, was able to identify that a family-centered tenet of his Mormon faith had enforced in him, as a man, an obligation to serve as the breadwinner for his family. Anish, conversely, described his upbringing in a rural Indian farming village and the social expectations he experienced from the community to conform to a provider role for his parents. While Anish had obviously rebelled against this role expectation and continued with his education to its terminal end, he later revealed in our

interviews his belief that Divya (as a potential future mother) would likely be responsible for the care of the household and he would be *the person that does the paid job*. What both Curtis' and Anish's quotes demonstrate is an understanding that there is, arguably, a 'right' way for the men to behave in relation to their families in various societies, thus signifying their adherence to socially-enforced gender expectations (Ambert, 2001; Bumpass, 1990; Doucet, 2009).

In many ways, this breadwinner role can itself be claimed to be a type of care role, in that it frequently allows for the necessities of life to be purchased for dependents (e.g. shelter, food, clothing). However, it is also important to recognize how this historically male care role differs from the care roles traditionally assumed by women in the home. For instance, a breadwinner role often carries with it a degree economic power and social recognition not normally seen within domestic labour, primarily because it is not only paid, but typically occurs within the public sphere where it can receive credit (Smith, 1987). This suggests that while women and men may both engage in care work through their own traditional gender roles, their labour may not be perceived as holding equivalent value within our society (Hochschild, 1979; Erickson, 2005).

Some have contended that once a man becomes a father, the pressures attached to the execution of a provider role may increase (Coltrane, 1996; Litton-Fox, Bruce & Combs-Orme, 2000). This was found to be the case with Jake and Eli, study participants who were primary breadwinners in families with babies on the way (e.g. Eli: *I need to get a promotion so I can make more money so I can do more things. I think that's just natural. Your family is also kind of depending on you to bring in more—so they could have better things too*). Much like the findings reported by Glauber and Gozjolko (2011) and Townsend (2002), both men suggested that they wanted to expand their employment opportunities, presumably to provide 'more' for their partners and children. This could imply that both expected a child to increase costs to their households (e.g. diapers, baby food, toys), but might also suggest a goal to provide their families with more than 'just enough' to get by financially.

In addition to monetary resources, the male participants in my study also described the variety of ways they sought to create financial stability within their households. Though

somewhat similar to the provider role, this role differed slightly, in that its aim was to create greater certainty with regard to finances within the family (e.g. Eli: *I'm still fairly new at work, but I often think – "I need to keep this job". I need to move forward*). This finding is corroborated by evidence from the United States Office of Family Assistance (National Responsible Fathers Clearinghouse, 2016) which is now offering programming to disadvantaged fathers to assist with job retention and enhancement, responsible credit borrowing, and financial planning—thus emphasizing the importance of this type of activity within families.

Within my research, the provision of economic stability was viewed by many of the male participants as an essential role under the larger umbrella of 'father' and was, at times, seen as a reason to delay having children if it could not be assured (e.g. Jason: *if we had had kids three or four years ago, we would have been in a much worse financial position than now*). This finding is supported by previous research that has uncovered heterosexual, coupled men reporting increased pressure to ensure that their income is as stable as possible before a child arrives (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dermott, 2006).

One potential motivator for this focus on financial stability could lie in the connection men may perceive between hegemonic masculinity and economic independence. Indeed, it has been argued that there has traditionally been social pressure placed on men to demonstrate economic competence (i.e. being capable of providing a steady income for themselves and their families) in order to be considered responsible, adult men (Marsiglio & Hutchinson, 2004). This particular idea was alluded to by one of my study's male participants who was in a period of employment transition between his postdoctoral position and a future academic role (e.g. Anish: *as long as we think that we can survive, we are okay with that [smiles]. My personal view is that I shouldn't ask anybody that's all. I can manage on my own*). Consequently, it could be suggested that some men may choose to delay the pursuit of certain life events (e.g. getting married or starting a family) until they can achieve them independently, presumably to avoid social judgement and/or marginalization.

I feel it prudent to also acknowledge that there were female participants in my study who also referenced a desire for financial stability prior to starting a family (Larissa (age 32):

we also didn't want to struggle with money. It was a matter of being stable; Emma (age 30): *there's also those pressures to sort of make sure that things are financially stable before we go into that;* Maryann (age 30): *I think culturally and across the board, for women there's this huge emphasis to find full-time work or a stable job before they have kids).* This is perhaps unsurprising, given that previous studies have also found that women over 30 who are contemplating motherhood may often factor financial stability into their decision-making (Benzies et al, 2006; Bute, Harter, Kirby, & Thompson, 2010; Evans & Grant, 2009). However, it could be reasoned that for the female participants in my study, there was not necessarily gendered social pressure for them to assume the role/co-role of financial stability provider as a marker of their femininity. This would imply that financial stability may be perceived as a primarily male role within families.

7.4.2.3 Non-Traditional Gender Roles

Whilst traditional gender roles within the participant couples were clearly evident, there was also evidence of men and women stepping outside these rigid role expectations. Penelope, for instance, was serving as the primary financial provider within her family while her husband was completing teacher's college. Emma, additionally, articulated her plans to be the primary breadwinner for her husband and child(ren) in the future. Several of the male trainees and partners also conveyed keen desires to defy traditional gender expectations with regard to care and provider roles within their families. This, to me, is a powerful finding, given the suggestion by previous researchers that men often feel socially unable to voice such desires within their families, friend groups, or communities (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001; Henwood & Procter, 2003).

Examples of such resistance to gender stereotypes related to care behaviour by the male participants included one man who mentioned his willingness to assume the primary responsibility for household chores (e.g. Jake: *I did my best to manage household chores, just in terms of keeping our kitchen going and cleaning and everything else*), in addition to other men who articulated their desires to take on a temporary role as an active caregiver for future children (e.g. Peter: *I would need to be up all night; I want to be able to help as much as I can, I don't want to just put that on Vivian*). Yet another man, Edward, described his desire to

take on a primary care role long term, as he felt his wife had a better chance of earning more money for the family (e.g. *if I have to cut down on my work and stay at home with the kid, that's not going to shatter my life*).

What all of these narrative quotes share is an arguable open-mindedness on the part of the men to step outside the historically gendered box of ‘provider’ and into a role that could involve a greater focus on traditionally feminized care work (i.e. via active parenting and domestic tasks). Indeed, research in recent decades has found greater numbers of men willing to expand their perceived roles as partners and fathers (Dienhart 1998; Gatrell, 2006; Pleck & Masciadrelli 2004; Shaw, 2008), with some choosing to take parental leaves from their employment for childcare and child bonding purposes (Doucet; 2006; 2009; Rochlen, Suizzo, McKelley & Scaringi, 2008). Consequently, findings from my research support the idea that the roles male partners and fathers might play within a family could be shifting—particularly within academic trainee families.

7.4.2.4 Shared Roles

In her 2011 dissertation examining the lives of doctoral student parents, researcher Danielle Estes found that the line between ‘mother’s responsibilities’ and ‘father’s responsibilities’ had the tendency to become blurred within trainee populations. To a certain extent, this same phenomenon was found to exist within the trainee population in my study; however, there was evidence that pressure to adhere to traditional gendered role expectations still lingered. For example, while some of the female trainee partners voiced a desire to return to paid work after a future parental leave (to contribute financially to their households), they also expressed a desire to base such work around their ability to remain the primary caregivers for their children (e.g. Ella: *I'll probably have to go back to work part-time and just kind of juggle, work part-time around Curtis' schedule*). Thus, we can see these women participating in a historically atypical role for mothers with young children (i.e. working a paid job outside the home) while simultaneously reinforcing the traditional belief that their primary responsibility as women should be to care for their children. Ultimately, professional women making such career choices may inevitably find themselves on the so-called ‘mommy track’

(Hill, Mårtinson, Ferris & Baker, 2004; Schwartz, 1989), whereby they may choose to moderate their career aspirations for the sake of their family care duties.

Alternatively, other participants described the ways they felt men should participate in childcare responsibilities within the home—a traditionally atypical role for men (e.g. Zhara: *I think both for men and women, it's important to pay attention to their families. But maybe I can say that if men pay attention to 40 percent it's enough. If women pay attention to 60 percent it's enough*; Ella: *I feel like as a good father, you would read to your kids or as a good mother, you'd help them learn and everything*). However, in these descriptions it is clear that the women viewed men more as ‘helpers’ to women in their primary role of caring for children (e.g. men were expected to devote less time than women to childcare; men performed more superficial childcare tasks while women engaged in more weighty ones). Such thinking could be argued to prevent men from being perceived as equal partners in the management of child care responsibilities (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000; Doucet, 2006)—a arguably necessary step forward on the path to gender labour equity.

Finally, it is also important to point out that there was evidence that some of the couples in my study were striving for an equitable division of labour in their relationships, regardless of gender. Some, for example, described how each partner contributed their own skills to the workings of the household (e.g. Sophia and James: *we definitely fall into different roles and we're really good at those particular roles. We definitely depend on one another to fill the things that we're not so good at*). Other male partners also expressed an awareness that they would need to play an active co-parent role in their households after the arrival of their children (e.g. Jake: *I have my share of responsibilities for what's going to be happening—changing the diapers, cleaning and maintaining the house*; Anish: *you have to have a balanced way of doing things in the family*). In these instances, we again see evidence of some men’s willingness to play a more expansive, shared care role in their future families (Dienhart 1998; Doucet, 2006; Gatrell, 2006; Pleck & Masciadrelli 2004; Shaw, 2008).

7.4.3 Pressures

Authors Heaton, Jacobson and Holland (1999) and Liefbroer (2009) have suggested that men’s and women’s choices surrounding whether to have a family are not only distinct,

but are also consistently changing. While such choices are likely partially motivated by the desires of individuals and couples (which, arguably, can be shaped gendered expectations surrounding family roles), this decision-making process may also involve internal and/or external pressures from a variety of sources. Therefore, this section will devote attention to this area of the participants' narratives, paying specific attention to the ways these pressures appeared to be gendered.

7.4.3.1 Women's Experiences

While pronatalist agendas have historically been shown to target both males and females (Anton, Mitobe & Schultz, 2012), it has been suggested that the ideology may disproportionately target women—in that it enforces the idea that a woman's worth is tied to her willingness and/or ability to conceive and carry a biological child (Cassidy, 2006; Jordan & Revenson, 1999; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000). This was certainly found to be the case in my study, as pronatalist pressure was specifically addressed by several of the female participants and was, at times, also referenced by their male partners (e.g. Maryann: *I think, as a woman, being able to have a child is something that can be really tied to your identity*; Divya: *being a mother, that is our pride and prestige and privilege*; Jason: *[Larissa's] parents were born in India...being a wife and a mother, that's Larissa's job as a woman*). Within these narrative quotes, we arguably see an external pronatalist pressure—which could be pushed through a variety of social sources—contributing to an internalized belief among the women (and some men) that motherhood was a key component of female social identity. Indeed, this notion of external pressures being internalized by women is a concept that was embedded throughout female narratives about family planning in my study.

A few of the female participants also alluded to the repercussions that could exist for women who did not (or could not) conform to social expectations surrounding childbearing (e.g. Divya: *if I don't have a kid, it means I can't go back to my country*; Vivian: *women are in this tenuous position whereby they have to fulfill certain social expectations or they're a defective human*). Even Eli conveyed that he anticipated pronatalist judgement when he responded to my inquiries about whether he and Scarlett had any difficulties getting pregnant with *that's a VERY personal question*. Such beliefs and reactions are consistent with

previously recounted experiences of negative social judgement amongst women who have rejected or are unable to fulfill the care provider role of ‘mother’ (Morrell, 2000).

Additionally, it should be noted that both Larissa and Divya’s experiences of being raised in South Asian families may have also contributed to their experiences of pronatalist pressure, in that motherhood has been reported to be a particularly essential component of social and cultural status for women living in this region of the world (Riessman, 2008). Whilst Divya might have experienced this cultural pressure directly through her upbringing in a South Asian country, Larissa would likely have been exposed second hand as a second-generation, South Asian woman.

Interestingly, in her 2012 exploration of Indian women employed outside the home, author Jyothisna Belliappa suggested that a third shift of labour is often required of South Asian women to simply ‘comply’ with the extensive family care expectations promoted by older generations. Arguably within the context of this study, this cultural manifestation of the third shift could also be applied to the pronatalist and emotional labour expectations of certain faith groups (e.g. Mormonism). Indeed, Ella and Curtis’ suggestion that family was an integral and well-promoted component of their lives together within the Mormon faith implies that they were also under intense pressure to comply with religious teachings.

While authors have previously reported that media, friends, peers, and clergy all have the potential to be powerful sources of pronatalist pressure in modern societies (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996; O’Reilly, 2010; 2012), a few women in my study were able to also identify family (mainly, mothers and mothers-in-law) as one of the most salient pronatalist vectors in the everyday contexts of their lives (e.g. Vivian: *Peter’s mother is forever saying “nice women have children... aren’t families wonderful?”*; Sophia: *I fell and hurt my back last week and my mom was like, “oh my gosh—you won’t ever have children now. Be careful with your body*). This finding corroborates work by Benzies et al. (2006) who have suggested that the desire to become a grandparent may be one of the motives behind the ‘pro-baby’ message often promoted by mothers/mothers-in-law to women in their families. It should be noted, however, that one female participant, Ella, mentioned that it was her brother-in-law (via his frequently promoted wish to become an uncle) that served as a vector for pronatalist pressure within her the context of her life. Consequently, my study suggests that

the often well-meaning pronatalist desires of extended family members (either from one's own family or from one's partner's) could be sources of pressure that women may find it difficult to avoid.

This fixation on women's procreation was a potential contributor to yet another prominent family planning pressure reported by the female participants: age-related pregnancy concerns. Amongst these participants, there was indeed a clear awareness of the well-reported difficulties associated with conceiving and carrying a healthy child for women over the age of 35 (Bushnik & Garner, 2008; Hewlett, 2002). Some also expressed their perceived sense that they were working under a type of age-related 'deadline' should they desire a biological family (e.g. Emma: *I'm not getting any younger, so it's no longer that kind of, "well, some day when we think we're sorted out"*) (Bute, Harter, Kirby, & Thompson, 2010; Hewlett, 2002). Arguably, such sentiments may have been related to the fact that the average age of the women in my study (29 years) was already above the average reported age of first-time mothers in Canada of 28.1 years (Milan, 2011). Therefore, it could be suggested that any age-related fertility concerns may have been amplified for these women through the knowledge that they were already behind their national peers in their pursuit of motherhood.

Some of the specific age-related pregnancy concerns expressed by the women in my study included fears about increased rates of genetic diseases associated with age, increased risk of age-related infertility or miscarriage, and general pregnancy concerns associated with advanced maternal age. All of these worries, unfortunately, are supported by recent Canadian evidence that suggests older mothers are at a greater risk for experiencing issues with conceiving, pregnancy complications (e.g. spontaneous abortions, ectopic pregnancy), and having a baby born with congenital anomalies (Johnson & Tough, 2012). Arguably, such medically supported pressures might lead some women to start their families earlier than they would have liked and/or planned in order to avoid difficulties in the process.

In addition to age, the decisions of female friends and acquaintances to pursue motherhood also proved to be an influential family planning pressure for several of the female participants. This was found to be particularly true for the women who felt that they were in some way 'behind' their peer group with regard to this particular life goal (i.e. friends were

another vector for age-related pregnancy pressure). For example, Vivian's fiancé Peter reported her, at the age of 35, as being in an "*all of my friends and all my siblings have kids*" period. This notion of a phase of life in which women within a friend group begin to start a family was also referenced by 29-year-old Emma (e.g. *I can't swing a cat without hitting someone who's pregnant, which is having an effect*), 32-year-old Divya (e.g. *back in India, my female classmates in school—they all had children*), and 32-year-old Larissa (e.g. *all of my coworkers are pregnant*).

It could be debated that through their attempts to feel as though they were 'fitting in' or 'keeping up with' their friend groups, some of the women might have felt internal pressure to grow their families (Balbo & Barban, 2014; Bernardi, 2003; Lois & Becker, 2014). Indeed, Balbo and Barban (2014) have found that women are more likely to report wanting a baby within the first three years after a friend gives birth and/or if they find out that their peers from high school are having children. Such thinking could imply that some of the women in my study were experiencing the syndrome-of-encirclement-by-pregnancy described previously by Bernardi (2003) with regard to their friend group, particularly when they discovered that younger individuals or individuals from formative periods of their lives were pursuing this life event.

The disproportionate impact of this peer contagion on women was further reinforced by a 31-year-old male participant from my study who discussed his experience with a friend's child (e.g. Yaser: *you imagine that someday you'll have some baby like that. That's very sweet....so it's more motivation...encouragement*). Indeed, it could be said that the overall tone of Yaser's statement differs from that of the female participants, in that it does not imply that he felt in any way excluded or 'behind' his friend due to his not yet having a child, despite him also already being above the average age of first time fatherhood among men in Canada of 29.1 years (Beaupré, Dryburgh & Wendt, 2014). Consequently, my research suggests that women may feel more heavily pressured than men to start their families at similar or earlier ages compared to their friends.

One last source of pressure identified by the female participants in my study was family—a group that has been implicated in some of the other family planning pressures

experienced by women. In many ways, female family members proved to be one of the most overt sources of pressure for the women, in that they had close access to the women and were often exceedingly direct in their inquiries about children (e.g. Divya: *our families will call now and they are thinking that either me or Anish have a problem. They will say “oh visit your doctor, a gynaecologist, and see what's wrong with you or your husband”*). Whilst certain participants appeared to simply brush off these inquiries, it remains possible that others may have experienced a sense of guilt over not meeting family expectations (Dell & Edem, 2004). For other female trainee participants, the pressure may have put them at risk for quitting their training altogether. This could have prompted such individuals to make ‘deals’ with their families to have a child only after they have attained a particular personal goal—a strategy that has been described previously by Bernardi (2003). This was clearly the case with Divya, who had negotiated with her parents her delay in getting married until after she had finished her master’s studies. Alternatively, James described potentially sabotaging the beginning of such a deal between Sophia and her mother: *I ended up actually talking to [Sophia’s mother] about it. I basically said “the PhD is going to happen. This is why and you need to get behind it”*. In both cases, we see an embedded belief among the women’s families that their primary focus should be on growing their families.

The female participant’s siblings/siblings-in-law were also found to be implicated in such behaviour (e.g. Ella: *my brother-in-law who is older and has his two young kids, he was pushing this idea about kids all the time, asking “do you want to have kids? I’m ready to be an uncle again”*). This finding corroborates work by Lyngstad and Prskawetz (2010) who have also suggested that siblings may serve as a prominent reminder to women of expectations regarding family planning within their extended family unit.

7.4.3.2 Men’s Experiences

The male participants in my research conveyed a slightly different experience of family planning pressure than their female counterparts. A few mentioned some isolated incidents of more individualized pressure from family (e.g. Anish: *I’m sure there are many people around, even in my family, asking “why no kids...oh is there some problem”*; Jason: *Two weeks after our wedding, my grandmother was asking*), while another, Yaser, described a general sense

that childlessness required an ‘excuse’ (i.e. being engaged in a doctorate) in order to be accepted. This finding is consistent with those described by Peterson and Jenni (2003), who reported a small number of their male participants experiencing social and family-related pressure to procreate. In my study, however, the more overwhelming sentiment among the men was that they were far less susceptible to external family planning pressures than their partners (e.g. James: *I think the only one that has the pressure is Sophia...it's probably because they're the ones that have to bear the child*; Curtis: *I don't think a man would get those questions quite as much. I think maybe Ella feels like she's being pressured. I don't*). This finding further corroborates the claim that women are disproportionately targeted by pronatalist messaging in our society, in all likelihood because they are the individuals capable of bearing children (Cassidy, 2006; Jordan & Revenson, 1999; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000).

Additionally, it could be debated that the attitudes displayed by some of the men may have also played a role in their experience of pressures related to children. Many displayed a strong commitment to making their own decisions on their own timelines, oftentimes in consultation with their female partners (e.g. Anish: *nobody can force me to or ask me to have a baby or not have baby. I mean, Divya can force me*). This resolve to not bend to the desires of others could be interpreted as male bravado consistent with an adherence to hegemonic masculine traits (Cheng 1999; Frank, 1991; Gray, Fitch, Fergus, Mykhalovskiy & Church, 2002), although it could also imply that the men were less uncomfortable with not meeting the family planning expectations of others than their female partners. In this case, however, the female partners could be viewed as a potential source of indirect pressure for the men (i.e. the women might channel some of the pressures they were experiencing into their partners—another example of stress contagion).

7.4.3.3 Shared Experiences

My research found the presence not only of individual pressures experienced by women and men, but also pressures experienced by both individuals within a couple. One of the most prominent examples of these shared pressures was religion, presumably because so many denominations place a strong focus on family (Adsera, 2006, Dell & Erem, 2004; Hayford & Morgan, 2008). Divya, for instance, was able to convey the idea that her Catholic faith

required children to be part of every couples' conception of family (e.g. *we were born as Christians and so, with a child, we are brought up with the concept that the family means father, mother and kids*). While Curtis came from a completely different faith (e.g. Mormonism), he conveyed an equivalent family expectation within his church teachings (e.g. *you cannot say anything that is anti-child. Unless someone says otherwise, it's assumed that children are on the table. I never really had a question about whether I wanted kids. It was the de facto choice*). In both these instances, we arguably see the participants internalizing the pronatalist message promoted by faiths that positioned children more as an inevitability than an active choice (Adsera, 2006; Koropecykj-Cox & Pendell, 2007; Heaton, Jacobson & Fu, 1992).

Given the social pressures often associated with conforming to certain religious teachings, it was perhaps not shocking to find the couples contemplating the potential consequences they could encounter if they chose not to have children. These included the possibility of looking out of place in the eyes of their church and/or community (e.g. Divya: *in the Christian community, we will look odd if we don't have a kid. They think that those who don't have kids are bad persons in the world*), being perceived as 'unsuccessful' as a married couple (Divya: [the priests who married us ask] *"where is the kid? We cannot tell that you're successful without that"*), or simply being the target of incessant questioning about children (Ella and Curtis: *when you have a culture that's so family-oriented, even people who aren't trying to put pressure on may ask "hey, no kids?" They may not try to apply pressure, but probably some people would feel it as pressure*). This finding corroborates work by authors such as Koropecykj-Cox and Pendell (2007) who have described the concept of childlessness as being socially ill-tolerated within certain faith groups. Additionally, Baston and Burris (1994) have proposed that individuals may avoid certain actions or behaviours (e.g. stating a choice to remain childfree) in order to preserve a positive image within their church community. Therefore, the findings from my study further support the idea that religion can serve as a strong source of pressure for couples to have children.

Closely related to the concept of religion for many individuals is marriage—an important life event that can also serve as a potential source of pronatalist pressure. Indeed, amongst the participant couples, all but one were married or engaged at the time of our

interviews, implying that marriage was a significant factor in their decision-making concerning children. There also appeared to be a strong sense among the couples that children were a logical and socially expected ‘next step’ in life following a wedding (e.g. Divya: *people just have the concept that you grow up, get a job, marry, have children. That's just life; Louis: once you get married, it seems like the natural next step would be to have a kid*). Such sentiments arguably also speak to the presence of familism (i.e. an idealized approach to family life) within some of the couples’ family values and decision-making. Interestingly, recent research by Cherlin, Talbet and Yasutake (2014) suggests that the participants’ educational background may have played a role in this reasoning. Specifically, these researchers found that individuals who had at least a bachelor’s degree were the most likely to not only wait until after marriage to have children, but to even get married at all. Given that all but one of the participants in my study had at least a bachelor’s degree (indeed, fourteen had at least a master’s), this finding by Cherlin, Talbert, and Yasutake appears to hold some weight with this group.

Additionally, both the male and female participants in my research reported feeling as though they *should* (emphasis intended) be married prior to having a child (e.g. Sophia: *we’re Catholic, so let's say things have to take place before a baby is ‘legitimately welcomed’ into our family. No bastards*). This finding is supported by previous research—albeit among only female participants—that found that many women hold traditional beliefs that marriage should come before children (Parry, 2005; Shaw, 2001).

One final pressure experienced by the participant couples in my study related not to their religion or relationships, but their perceived physical abilities to interact with their children over time. Specifically, the couples felt pressure to have their children earlier rather than later, in part because they feared that they would face certain health and stamina issues with age. For example, some of the participants expressed fearing that their bodies would be less able to keep up with young children as they got older (e.g. Larissa: *I don't want to be 50 and having a kid...I want to be able to keep up with them*), while others feared that they would become out of touch (e.g. Penelope: *I didn't want to be a lot older than my child and be really out of touch*), or lose patience with a child if they had them later in life (e.g. Zhara: *in terms of being calm when the baby cries, being able to play with the baby, I think age is important*

because when you're older you can't tolerate things as well). Whilst such concerns could be inconsequential to some, they likely remain important to those desiring a more hands-on relationship with their children. Additionally, these types of concerns could prove to be increasingly salient for couples in Canada, as evidence suggests that the average age of first time parents in this country is increasing (Milan, 2011; Beaupré, Dryburgh & Wendt, 2014).

7.4.4 Constraints

While the participants in my study spoke about many of the factors driving their family planning forward, they also at times offered details about factors that were or had constrained their ambitions for children. These constraints were found to exist in a multitude of realms within the trainee couples' lives and, like many other aspects of their decision-making, demonstrated highly gendered experiences related to everything from departmental expectations, to role management and strain, to finances. The common elements that each constraint shared, however, was a connection to academic training and an anticipated external fear that major life events and doctoral/postdoctoral training would be difficult for the participants to co-manage. Indeed, this idea has been previously articulated by Jayson (2004) in her discussions about the complications often associated with delayed adolescence.

7.4.4.1 Departmental and Supervisory Culture

A few of the female participants in my research (e.g. Vivian and Zhara) described direct experience with either a departmental culture or a supervisor that was not supportive of trainees' desires to have a family—a factor that, arguably, had acted as a constraint to their thinking about parenthood:

In my department, whenever anyone gets pregnant it's "if you were a serious doctoral student, you wouldn't have done that" ... I think that the assumption is that when you take on this role of parent that you're giving up all other roles. (Vivian)

My old PhD supervisor expected, for example, that something gets finished before we leave for the day...it was really impossible to manage both life and studies. I didn't like it because I couldn't take enough time for my family (Zhara)

This consideration has been reported previously by Ehrenberg, Jakubson, Groen, So and Price (2007) in their study examining the factors influencing doctoral student attrition and

graduation rates. Both of the women's experiences above, however, speak to prominent belief within many academic cultures that an individual's work should take precedence over other aspects of their lives (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). These women's stories (in addition to the absence of male stories speaking to this experience) also point toward a gender bias being imbedded in this thinking—that is, the assumption that a woman's commitment to her work will diminish if she is to have a family (Anderson & Mieztis, 1999; Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Sadly, it is likely not out of the question to predict that the some departments and/or supervisors might react to this perceived decrease in commitment by reducing the time and/or resources that they invest in a trainee mother. Such action would almost certainly have a long term impact on such women's future professional success.

7.4.4.2 Pressure from the Trainee's Own Academic Mother

One incidental finding from the participant group in my study was the potential constraining effect that an unsupportive academic parent could provide to the experience of family planning—a topic area that does not appear to have been explored previously in the literature. Specifically, four of my study's participants mentioned having a mother who either held a PhD (or had embarked upon one) who was in some way against the idea of starting a family during academic training. This, unfortunately, was a reaction many of the participants found emotionally hurtful and somewhat detrimental to their desires for children. While Louis, Zhara and Maryann had not described their mothers as being entirely anti-children (indeed, the general sentiment conveyed by these participant's mothers was concern about their children finishing their studies and/or being able to financially provide for a child), Emma's seemed to believe that her daughter's academic life would be easier without a family (e.g. *she says, "never get married, never have kids". The fact that it rolls off my tongue should give you some idea*).

On a larger level, this attitude speaks not only to the androcentric bias of the academy (Anderson & Mieztis, 1999; Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Erickson, 2012; Haake, 2008; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008), but also to the work-

family role conflict that can often exist for academic parents (particularly women) who may feel that their role as a parent is incompatible with success in the academy (Elliott, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko & Lu, 2011; O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Indeed, it could be argued that all of the above mentioned mothers wanted to spare their daughters (or daughter-in-law, in the case of Penelope) the negative impacts associated with this role stress (e.g. feelings of guilt or ineffectiveness, exhaustion, burnout, attrition). Additionally, Emma’s mother’s suggestion that her daughter should *never have children* brings to light the difficult choices that many female academics may be forced to make for the sake of their careers (Ellis & Bochner, 1992; Huang, 2008; Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009).

7.4.4.3 Women’s Pursuit of Training-Related Goals

Most of the trainee participants in my study reported having academic goals that they were striving to achieve. Some of these were more short term in nature (e.g. defending one’s comprehensive exams successfully; getting a manuscript published; achieving a successful research result), while others required commitment over a longer period of time (e.g. graduating, finding a faculty position). For several of the female participants, however, there was a sense that the pursuit of motherhood at the ‘wrong’ time academically could place these goals in jeopardy—thus positioning them as a potential constraint to family planning. This was perhaps conveyed most acutely by Sophia when she stated:

I’ve been pregnant twice before. I ended both pregnancies. *The last time was with James just after I got accepted for my PhD and after I got that acceptance letter. It was the happiest time of my life and then when I got the news, I thought all of that had suddenly been taken away from me. So [pause] it was mostly my decision to end the pregnancy. At that time, I really felt like I was running away from this responsibility. I really felt like I was being selfish and I felt that I wasn't even allowing the opportunity for that to be explored. I just said, “no I can't sacrifice this right now. No, this is something I've worked too hard for”. But now, I feel like it's a whole different ballgame. I feel like I'm in a different phase of my life. I feel like a baby wouldn't stop me from getting to where I need to be.*

Indeed, Sophia’s concerns speak to the stresses associated with competing role commitments associated with varying identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). As has been stated previously by Stryker and Burke (2000) and

Hogg, Terry & White (1995), individuals commit to identities (e.g. ‘student’, ‘trainee’, ‘friend’, ‘volunteer’) that hold meaning for them personally. Thus, it stands to reason that the greater meaning the identity holds for a person, the greater commitment to enacting that identity an individual is likely to make. Unfortunately, when individuals hold multiple demanding identities that must compete for limited time and energy resources, they can experience feelings of role-related stress associated with their inability (perceived or experience) to adequately fulfill each identity’s requirements (Cinamon & Rich, 2005).

In the case of Sophia, Ella, and Penelope, we see women struggling with the possibility of this type of role tension. Indeed, all suggest an understanding of the commitment necessary for the role of ‘student’, as well as the likely commitments that would concurrently be necessary for the role of ‘parent’. It could also be speculated however, based on narrative elements in each of their stories, that they also had an awareness of the domestic roles that were expected of them as women. Perhaps anticipating the co-management challenges that the role of mother could pose to the attainment of their educational goals (e.g. it would place greater stresses on their time, energy, and financial resources), Sophia and Ella had chosen to forgo motherhood for a time. Such decisive action could be said to have decreased their potential experience of role strain and increased their chances of success with regard to their goals.

It is important, however, to acknowledge that this strategizing would not always be the case for every female trainee, as some might become pregnant unexpectedly. If such trainees chose to keep their babies, they would be required to find strategies to co-manage the roles of ‘mother’ and ‘student’ or risk losing one. In such instances, and given the social pressures placed on women to prioritize the care of their families over every other aspect of their lives, the more likely role to be sacrificed would be that of trainee (Baker, 2010). Indeed, statistics surrounding female doctoral student attrition have suggested that these types of role strain scenarios may be a major contributor to the increased number of women leaving academic programs in recent years (Lovitts, 2001; Ferreira, 2003; Lott, Gardner & Powers, 2009).

Unfortunately, the intimate partners of several of the female partners in my research conveyed a worry about this very outcome (e.g. Peter: *[Vivian] might just leave the program.*

I don't want her to finish her program if she doesn't want to, but she does want to). To mitigate such constraints, one couple appeared to be strategically planning the timing of a potential pregnancy to coincide with a more advantageous time for them academically (e.g. *Anish: so we're thinking, and we have a mutual agreement about this, that she should get her PhD finished, or mostly finished, before kids*). This type of family planning around a time constraint has been observed among female academic populations before (Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013), with women reporting a planned delay in becoming pregnant or adopting to accommodate a more convenient time in their work schedules for a child (e.g. after receiving tenure; after a grant has run out; during a semester when they are not teaching). This finding suggests that trainees desiring a family may need to work the timing of this endeavour not only around their body's schedule, but the academy's as well.

7.4.4.4 Finances

Finally, given the relatively low stipend wages that have been reported among doctoral and postdoctoral trainees in Canada (Mitchell et al., 2013; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009) in addition to the financial costs associated with children, it was unsurprising to find many participants in my research describing limited finances as a constraint to their family planning. This was a particular concern for international doctoral students (who were paying higher tuition fees, as reported by Kapusta and Roadevin, 2011) and those students in the early years of their degrees (who were less likely to have secured university-related employment or scholarship funding). Interestingly, those participants completing doctoral degrees reported greater certainty with regard to their stipend funding and employment in the near future than their postdoctoral counterparts (i.e. they had guaranteed funding for a certain number of years in their degree that was not dependent on research grant funding), suggesting that this family planning constraint could be experienced differently at these two training levels. Overall, couples with one partner working in full-time, non-training related employment (i.e. Scarlett and Eli; Larissa and Jason; Sophia and James) were the least likely to report finances as being a current constraint in their family planning. This suggests that these couples perhaps felt more financially well-off and/or secure and, thus, in a better position to handle the financial burden of a child.

While financial constraints surrounding children were reported by both men and women in my study, they were raised far more frequently in interviews with male participants (e.g. Louis: *I've also got to say [sighs], I've been worried about our financial situation. Especially with [Penelope] being a PhD student; Jason: if we had had kids three or four years ago, we would have been in a much worse financial position than now because I was in school*). As stated previously, this finding speaks to a breadwinning and/or financial security provider role being a gendered family role concern for men (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Dermott, 2006; Feldman & Nash, 1984; Marsiglio & Hutchinson, 2004).

7.4.5 Supports

The final important component of the participant couple's narratives involved the supports they felt would be beneficial to their successful management of a dual trainee/parent role. Some of these factors were found to come from the partners themselves (via their attitudes and approaches), while others came from external sources within their families, schedules, and institutions.

7.4.5.1 Attitudes Amongst Trainee Couples

One of the more profound supports identified by many of the couples in my study was the attitude they brought to the topic of trainee parenthood—mainly, the belief that the timing, finances, and scheduling involved with parenthood might never be perfect, but that 'less than perfect' was more than adequate. Such an approach to thinking about family life, arguably, sits in stark contrast to the 'intensive mothering' ideology that has dominated North America approaches to parenting for decades (Hays, 1996; Moreau & Kerner, 2012). This intensive approach to childrearing, which has been described by Hays (1996) as "child-centered, expert guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive" (pp. 8), in many ways underlies the frequently referenced societal notion that a good woman and mother should put nothing ahead of her child(ren) (Bosch, 2013; Hays, 1996). While the expectations involved with intensive mothering have traditionally only been viewed to impact women, Estes (2011) found both mothers and fathers could be influenced by this parenting ideology.

Although many of my study's participants alluded to an awareness (and, arguably, internalization) of an intensive parenting ideology (e.g. Scarlett: *the baby and motherhood is*

going to come first; Edward: they have to come first; Divya: being a mother, that is our pride and prestige and privilege), several also demonstrated a commitment to making things work in the most reasonable ways possible within the contexts of their lives as trainees. Such an attitude required a recognition on the part of the participants that they might not currently possess the most ‘ideal’ financial resources to start a family (e.g. James: *we’d make it work [financially]. I think that’s what our parents did and their parents before them did*; Jake: *we certainly didn’t want to say, “oh well we can’t right now”* or think that *we couldn’t consider trying until we’re in jobs*), or to spoil a child with material goods (e.g. Maryann: *if you don’t care about you know, having every toy or playset or every accessory, you’re okay*), this did not preclude them from being ‘good’ future parents. This idea was perhaps summarized best by Yaser and Zhara when they stated the following:

We could say “*we should have a baby no matter what happens*”. *And the other extreme is that “everything should be perfect to have a baby” ...we’re in the middle, so we have the basic requirements to have a baby. We think it’s important to have a plan, but you shouldn’t expect that everything should be perfect to have a baby.*

In many ways, these participant attitudes personify the avenues for change promoted by women’s rights advocates who have suggested that parents must “give voice to the role conflict they experience and, to some extent, resist the seeming impossibility created by societal expectations of mothers” (Larkins, 2015; pp. 14). While the struggle against such expectations would, debatably, be harder for women, my study gives some weight to the notion that trainee couples might be able to rise to this resistive challenge together.

Undeniably, there was evidence in my study that many of the participant couples intended to tackle the future challenges associated with managing parenthood and academic training as a family unit (e.g. Penelope: *Louis and I always just think about what’s best for us*). While not all of the couples described their intention to take the same approaches, there was a sense that they intended to draw upon one another as sources of support for managing work and family responsibilities (e.g. Emma: *I think if you have a supportive partner, I think even in academia it can make a big difference*). For some of the participants, this co-management process was already being tested through other care work (e.g. Sophia and James: *we’re kind of experiencing it through our dog...you’re developing these coping skills and different tools that we’ve used to overcome certain difficulties*). Others, conversely, anticipated that both their

intimate relationship and future children would need to be made key life priorities (e.g. *Scarlett and Eli: We need to make sure that we are taking care of [a child] properly and of each other too. Family is the priority for us*). All of their described attitudes and approaches, however, fit within the guidelines for managing family responsibilities laid out by the non-profit Center for Parenting Education in the United States (2016). Indeed, this educational resource and support organization suggests that those individuals with a mutual commitment to care for a child should work together as a ‘parenting team’ in order to meet any family challenges that lie ahead.

7.4.5.2 Finding Academic Parent Mentors and Role Models

American activist and child’s rights advocate Marian Wright Edelman’s famous suggestion that “you can’t be what you can’t see” was found to be particularly meaningful for many of the trainee participants in my research. Indeed, several of these individuals actively sought out academic/parent mentors and role models who could provide support for the future task of balancing academic training and parenthood. Particularly for female trainee mothers, mentors and role models served as sources of encouragement and assisted the women by helping to build a sense of community and support (Ellis, 2014)

While the terms ‘mentor’ and ‘role model’ could be perceived as synonymous, I classify them as distinct roles that each served a different purpose for the trainees in my study. Mentors, for example, were found to be individuals who made the effort to understand a trainee’s desires surrounding family and leveraged some of their time and influence to assist with the achievement of trainee goals (Levinson, Kaufman, Clark & Tolle, 1991). Role models, conversely, were found to be those individuals who served more of an aspirational role for the student, but did not make a large resource investment (Levinson, Kaufman, Clark & Tolle, 1991).

Amongst these female trainees, some of the more important mentors were found to be individuals at higher levels within the academic hierarchy who were also parents themselves. These types of mentors included academic supervisors (e.g. Penelope: My supervisor also *has a kid and he's like “if you ever need some help, talk to me about it”*) as well as other professors within a trainee’s department or faculty (e.g. Scarlett: It was really helpful to hear

that my mentor *went through the exact same thing, and her and her husband decided to have their first while they were both in their PhD*). Overall, the female participants appeared to view these types of mentors as academic allies, in that they not only understood and supported the women's desires for family, but were often in a position to provide them with invaluable practical academic support (e.g. advocating on their behalf to departments or committee members). Overall, this finding is supported by previous research which has found female trainee mothers reporting their decision-making process being heavily influenced by the support of an academic supervisor (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). While these studies suggest that female academic mentors might forge a greater connection with female trainees, my study suggests that supportive male supervisors could also be beneficial (but perhaps in slightly different ways).

Formal and informal student parent support groups have also been reported to be extremely beneficial to trainee parents—even to those simply considering pregnancy or adoption (Lynch, 2008; Ellis, 2014). Such supports were found to exist among the participants in my study, with one female trainee describing how a support group on campus helped her decide when might be the best time for her to get pregnant during her studies (e.g. Scarlett: [a support group for women in STEM fields] *had an informal session about becoming a parent while doing grad studies and they suggested that the best time is after you've done your comps, but before you start writing your thesis*). Interestingly, this support group appeared to bridge the division between mentors and role models, in that it was comprised of individuals from varying realms within the academy (e.g. students, professors, support staff, administrators). Consequently, these individuals were often in different positions of influence with regard to their ability to assist women with concerns beyond mere encouragement or solidarity.

Student parent role models, often drawn from within a trainee's own department or friend group, were also found to play an important support role for both male and female participants in my study. In particular, these individuals were found to be valuable sources of advice concerning how to co-manage research and a family (e.g. Penelope: [*another student with a child in my department has*] *been really encouraging and I enjoy talking to her about*

what it's like; Curtis: I investigated before I decided to enrol and explicitly asked the students if any of the guys had families).

For the participants in my research, role models were also found to be individuals who had ‘paved the way’, so to speak, for student parents in their research groups or departments (e.g. Scarlett: it helps that *there are some young fathers in my lab and some of them have already drawn these lines and said, “no I can't have meetings on Wednesdays because my daughter has swimming lessons”*). This finding supports previous research which has suggested that student parent role models can often provide academic trainees (and, arguably, departments) with evidence that the successful management of trainee parenthood is possible (Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Sullivan, 2003). Additionally, given the social isolation that has been reported previously amongst individuals transitioning into the role of parent (Parry, Glover & Mulcahy, 2013; Latshaw, 2011; Grey, 2015), relationships between trainee parents could be suggested to be one opportunity for individuals in similar life situations to connect (Nelson, Kushlev & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003; Parry, Glover & Mulcahy, 2013)

Finally, one incidental finding related to trainee parent role models was the potential for these individuals to demonstrate unrealistic academic expectations, particularly for female trainee mothers. Indeed, two of the participants specifically mentioned female trainees who they knew were able to be particularly productive from a publication perspective whilst on leave (e.g. Scarlett: there was *a supermom in my department who wrote three papers while she was on leave, so I would be interested in trying that*). While such aspirations might be achievable for some, these types of productivity expectations might reinforce the belief that women should continually strive to be ‘ideal academic workers’, regardless of whether they are also caring for a child (Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

7.4.5.3 Flexible Schedules and Working Environments

Given the important role flexibility—with regard to place and time of work—has been found to play in healthy work/life management among junior academics (reported by Asselin, 2008; Eyre-White, 2009; Lynch, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), it was perhaps

unsurprising to find my study's participants also referencing this resource as a potential practical source of support for trainee families. Specifically, the participants mentioned the ways work and schedule flexibility could be beneficial to the tasks involved with pregnancy (e.g. Maryann: *it's awesome...we have a midwife appointment tomorrow midday and Jake is able to easily attend that*; Ella: *I'm sure Curtis could actually work it out with his professors and say, "okay my wife's due at this time. Can I go ahead and work on some of the homework beforehand?"*), partner support (e.g. Curtis: *I can do all the work I want from home... Ella could go out and do something that she's not able to do if I were at home*), and future childcare (e.g. Divya: *so after that, all the time is for analyzing data. Saturdays I can sit and do the analysis, so if the baby is there I don't think it's such a big care to manage*). While it is important to acknowledge that not all trainees will have flexibility in their working hours or location, those who do have reported their preference for this type of academic working environment (over other, less flexible workplaces) for the purposes of raising a family (Moreau & Kerner, 2012).

7.4.5.4 Childcare Provided by Extended Family

Given the financial stresses trainees have been reported to experience (Mitchell et al., 2013; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009), in addition to their often non-standard working hours (Anaya, Glaros, Scarborough & Tami, 2009; American Association of University Professors, 2001; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013), trainee parents who require help caring for their child must often seek out resources that are not only affordable, but also flexible and readily available (Moreau & Kerner, 2012). Childcare provided by an extended family member could be argued to meet many of these criteria, thus explaining why many of my study's participants spoke about such individuals (frequently, the trainee's mother or mother-in-law) as sources of future family care support (e.g. Emma: *my mother-in-law has basically said "if you have children, I will babysit all the time. I will literally move in."* Ella: *I've told my mother "when I'm having a baby, I want you to come up here*). Indeed, such individuals have been mentioned previously in the literature as a trusted and often much needed source of childcare support for trainee parents (Bosch, 2013).

Unfortunately, the amount of support such family members could provide to trainees has the potential to be limited by a variety of factors, including their proximity to the trainee, as well as citizenship. For example, trainees attending institutions in the same region as extended family members might be able to take advantage of this type of childcare support on a frequent or longer term basis (e.g. Scarlett and Eli: *our families also aren't too far away, less than an hour, so there's going to be people around. That was important to us too when we were making this decision to get pregnant. We aren't isolated*). Conversely, international trainees or those training further away from their families might have more limited access to this support, particularly if grandparents possess limited travel visas for the trainee's host country (e.g. Zhara: *my mother will come too, for four months. I think it will be very difficult because we are alone here. In my home country when someone wants to study or work, grandparents do a lot*). Thus, while my study showed family to be an important potential source of childcare support for many trainees, it would be advisable for academic institutions to not assume that all trainee parents will have access to such a resource. As a result, alternative affordable childcare options for this group might be warranted.

7.4.5.5 Parental Leave and On-site Daycare

While most of the participants in my study appeared aware of the availability of parental leave for both mothers and fathers in Canada (indeed, this was a benefit associated with living in Canada that the American trainee couples appeared quite excited about), only a handful of the trainees discussed their desire to utilize this support. This was an intriguing finding, given the fact that the research study site was one of only a handful of universities across Canada to offer paid parental leave to all of its graduate students (Allen, 2014), regardless of the source of their stipend funding (i.e. students from other institutions with funding through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Canadian Institute for Health Research, or the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council are typically able to receive some paid leave). While three female trainees discussed their desires to take some amount of parental leave (e.g. Divya: *I will do what Anish's lab mates did. They are mothers and they said they did one year of maternity leave*; Scarlett: *I've also been approved for a parental leave bursary for two terms through the university*), only a few of male trainee partners (e.g. Peter and Eli) employed outside the academy expressed interest in using this resource themselves. This

finding is consistent with previously research which has suggested that academic fathers are less likely to take parental leave than their female counterparts (Haas, Allard & Huang, 2002; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). Some have suggested that such decision may be due, at least in part, to many men's concerns about how a leave might impact their work and/or reputation among colleagues or supervisors (Haas, Allard & Huang, 2002; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). Indeed, when probed in our interview about their reluctance to take a leave, several of the male trainees stated that they just wanted to finish as quickly as possible, or feared that their supervisors would take issue with this decision.

One final support discussed by a handful of the trainee participants (mainly, those who were pregnant) was daycare. Interestingly, relatively few of the twenty overall participants were even aware that their institution offered on-site, subsidized daycare to graduate students, suggesting that this resource was perhaps not being marketed well among trainees on campus. Given the value this type of support has been suggested to provide to trainees (particularly if it is flexible with drop-ins and hours of operation), it would appear advisable for the study site to ensure that this resource is not only able to meet the needs of its trainee parent population, but is also well promoted (Lynch, 2008; Rahman, 2015).

7.5 Harnessing Standpoints: Reflections, Locations, and Recommendations

This final discussion subsection begins with critical reflection of my use of feminist standpoint theory in my work, including some criticisms that have been levelled against the approach and explanations about how I addressed these issues. This leads into the provision of two distinct, but corroborating standpoints (i.e. women's and men's) on the topic of academic trainee family planning formed using the critical analysis that has taken place in this discussion chapter. Finally, adhering to feminist research's impetus to work for positive change, I provide some recommendations to assist academic trainees and their partners.

7.5.1 Reflections on the Use of Standpoint Theory

While I would argue that feminist standpoint epistemology sheds critical and political light on the knowledge of those not traditionally viewed as dominant voices within our society (e.g. women, individuals whose racial, cultural, socioeconomic, religious or sexual identities

place them in a marginalized/subjugated position), it has faced its share of criticisms. These have included concerns about the possibility of epistemic privilege being granted to certain groups, a lacking recognition of intersectionality in feminist research, the creation of an essentialist standpoint, issues related to epistemic relativism and—in larger ways—the ability for standpoint research to be used to achieve social and political change. In this subsection, I will address how my study has responded to each of these criticisms, in addition to the ways I have worked to meet the research expectations laid out by standpoint researches before me.

To begin, I would like to tackle how my study has met Harding's requirements for strong objectivity with regard to feminist standpoint theory research (1993; 2007). As Harding asserts that true objectivity is likely not possible within the context of social science research (e.g. the elimination of researcher bias and the achievement of value neutral research are, arguably, unattainable), she advocates that researchers practice reflexivity in their inquiry approach. As a result, I have sought to position myself within this research, through the inclusion of aspects of my own narrative that pertain to the topic of research (i.e. the prologue, interlude, and epilogue) in order to illuminate the unique lens I bring to the work. Reflecting on my role as a female doctoral student and investigator has been an important part of this process, as I have held a continually changing role as both an insider and outsider within the context of my own research (e.g. an insider when I was speaking to another female participant and/or academic trainee; an outsider when I was speaking to male participants or those not in the academy). This reflexivity extended to my analysis of the interview transcripts and my writing. Specifically, I have exposed the ways that my positioning as a researcher may have influenced the details participants chose to share with me and how they chose to disclose them (e.g. discussion about participant reactions to questions or the interview process, their language choices).

Second, I would like to address how my study tackled the issue of epistemic privilege—that is, the belief that a particular individual or group be granted a standpoint based solely on biological or identity factors. Indeed, as both Harding (1986; 1987) and Crasnow (2014) assert that, for a 'perspective' on a topic to be elevated to a 'standpoint', there must be willingness for individuals and/or groups to look politically at the impact social expectations, values, and customs have on their choices and outcomes. Consequently, in my multiple interviews with

study participants (in which we critically conversed about aspects of their academic and personal lives) and in my subsequent analysis of these interview transcripts, I have sought to unearth the gendered experiences and inequities that exist for academic trainees, their partners, and their family planning. Throughout this discussion chapter, I have also positioned the participant narratives within the more recent feminist dialogue that exists on the topic of trainee parenthood within the academy (Bosch, 2013; Ellis, 2015; Estes, 2011; Holm, Prosek & Godwin Weisberger, 2015; Larkins, 2015; Leaman, 2015; Moreau & Kerner, 2012; Sallee, 2015; Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009), helping to further entrench participant stories within a larger group narrative. I would assert that as my study included vantage points not always conveyed within this literature (e.g. stories of trainee partners, postdoctoral stories, male trainee stories, stories of trainees of colour, stories from trainees in Canadian institutions, international trainees), my research has helped to critically expand and enrich our understanding of the knowledge and experiences of academic trainees and their partners.

Third, concerns about ethnocentricity and a lack of intersectionality within feminist standpoint research have been raised in the past and have contributed to accusations of essentialism with regard to the creation of standpoint (Flax, 1990; Hekman, 1997; Hill-Collins, 2009; hooks, 1994; Narayan, 2009; West & Turner, 2004). To help remedy this issue, standpoint scholars have recommended that diverse vantage points be included in larger explorations of oppression and marginalization (Hill-Collins, 2009; Narayan, 2009). In my project, I was fortunate enough to recruit a group of participants who were able to bring their knowledge and experiences within varying cultural backgrounds to our interviews together (e.g. South Asian, Asian, Middle Eastern, mixed race couples). This subsequently allowed for a broader analysis of the ways culture might factor into experience of academic training and/or family planning. Furthermore, the participants also brought diversity to the project through their varying religious backgrounds (e.g. Catholicism, Mormonism), ages (spanning from 24 to 36 years of age), disciplinary areas of study, and research career stages (ranging from first year doctoral student to upper year postdoctoral trainee). Thus, rather than adding to an essentialist perspective on academic trainee parenthood decision-making, my project represents the diversity that can exist within this often overlooked and understudied group.

Fourth, critics of feminist standpoint theory have suggested that the approach's focus on the knowledge possessed by subjugated groups runs the risk of privileging certain vantage points over others—an idea referred to as epistemic relativism (Antony, 1993; Kukla, 2006; Rolin, 2006). However, I would argue that this project has not sought to privilege trainee knowledge over that of others (or even women's knowledge over that of men's). Instead, I have simply endeavoured to add diversity to the larger discussion about parenthood within the academy by re-telling the arguably less accessed knowledge possessed by academic trainees. Indeed, the historically androcentric composition of the academy and, in more recent years, the focus on established (i.e. tenured) academic women's perspectives in the telling of academic parent stories could be debated to have limited the vantage points available on this topic area by privileging certain knowledge (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Evans & Grant, 2009; Huang, 2008; Kemkes-Grottenthaler, 2003; Kraus, 2002; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008). Consequently, I would assert that my research has helped to expand the standpoints available, thus increasing society's potential understanding about academic family planning and parenthood.

Lastly, given Crasnow's assertion that "understanding how shared interests are forged should be part of the complete account of feminist standpoint" theory (2014, pp. 159), I will devote the remainder of this chapter to this critical, and largely political process. To achieve this goal, I will consolidate the experiences of my study's participants (in particular, those related to experiences of subordination and marginalization within the academy, family, and society) to aid in the communication of women's and men's standpoints related to academic training and family planning.

7.5.2 Articulating Participant Standpoints

Feminist standpoint theory focuses direct attention on the value of the knowledge possessed by groups that often lack power within our society (Braidotti, 2003; Harding, 1993; Naples, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). In this study, I was able to use this theoretical approach to unearth the ways academic training and family planning were gendered experiences that carried with them differing experiences of power and privilege. Through the creation of separate narratives for the female and male participants—told side-by-side—I was able to also

shed light on the specific areas where motivations and pressures related to their professional and personal lives were mutually experienced, in addition to areas where these elements diverged. My study was also able to uncover the often small ways that the participants challenged institutional expectations (e.g. academia, family, society, religion) in their attempts to meet their own personal and professional goals.

Overall, the women in my study were able to critically articulate extensive and, arguably, well entrenched experiences of subordination related to their roles as trainees and/or partners, as well as future mothers. The men, however, also alluded to experiences of marginalization, though these appeared to be largely focused on their role as future fathers and, potentially, primary caregivers. Therefore, I contend that in this study I was able to access two standpoints on the topic of academic trainee family planning (i.e. women's and men's) that helped to inform and corroborate the vantage point of the other. Indeed, some standpoint theory scholars have created some precedent for such an assertion (Hirschmarm, 1998), in that they have suggested that the approach allows for the existence of multiple standpoints on a topic, with each serving a vital role in helping to critically illuminate human experience. Drawing from the critical analysis that took place in this chapter, I will consolidate these standpoints in the following sections.

7.5.2.1 The Women's Vantage Points

Given that this project involved the experiences of academic trainees and their partners, it seems prudent to begin with a critical account of the ways power and privilege operated within this realm. Amongst the seven female participants who were either presently or formerly enrolled in doctoral and postdoctoral training in this study, there was a clear perception that their gender had created a more marginalized experience than that of their male peers—a notion that the women frequently discussed with frustration. At least a certain amount of the women's discontent stemmed from their understanding that they were not only female trainees working within an extremely demanding academic culture, but also women living in a society that expected them to prioritize their home and family responsibilities above their work. The sharp contrast that existed between these two frequently competing roles had repeatedly contributed to feelings of inadequacy within the group and, arguably, had

driven some of the women to display workaholic tendencies to ‘prove’ their academic commitment. Such thoughts and actions could be argued to pose a risk for future burnout, as the women’s opportunities for restorative leisure activities were impacted by the time they spent completing paid and unpaid work. One participant had even left her program to avoid this particular stressor.

For those who remained in their training, a marginalized status within male-dominated fields (reflected through a largely male professor and/or student base) at times motivated the women to make changes to their communication styles (e.g. downplaying their gender; emulating the more aggressive styles they had observed among some male academics). While the women were not expressly advised to make these types of changes, it could be argued that their desire to ‘fit in’ and succeed within a largely male-dominated academic culture had sometimes discouraged them from interacting in ways that may have felt more authentic to them as individuals.

The female academic trainee partners in this study were also not immune to experiences of marginalization (and, debatably, exploitation) within and by the academy. Among the five female partners enrolled in my study (including two who were also trainees themselves) were stories of academic training as a ‘family task’ that frequently required significant others to provide practical and emotional support to trainees (e.g. completing household chores, family care work, financial support, gifts of time and care that helped to motivate and de-stress trainees) (Brannock, Litten & Smith, 2000). While it was not always readily recognized (and was often freely given out of love and concern), this type of emotional labour required time and energy sacrifices from partners—resources that were often drawn away from their own leisure time (including the time spent with intimate partners), careers, and educational ambitions. However, such support was arguably integral to the success of the academic trainees, in that it allowed them to devote more of their focus to their research. While my study also found men providing this type of support to female trainees, the care role of ‘supportive partner’ to an academic trainee has historically been held by women (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013). Thus, it could be contended that the academy has not only demanded complete commitment from its historically male, paid members, but also from their traditionally female, unpaid partners.

Such criticisms of this arguable exploitation and appropriation of women's unpaid emotional labour (which, in some cases was also completed by men as well) speak to the neo-Marxist and Marxist feminist undertones present in my work—concepts that have traditionally helped to influence standpoint theory (Barrett, 2014; Harding, 2007; Hartsock, 1983; McLaughlin, 2003). While Marx and his contemporaries were largely concerned with sources of worker exploitation centering around issues of socioeconomic class, Marxist feminist scholars have diverted attention in such a way as to not only recognize class, but also worker oppression related to gender and other forms of intersectionality (Barrett, 2014). For example, Vogel (2013) has argued that often political work performed by Marxist feminist researchers has exposed the ways that women's and other traditionally subjugated unpaid labour has been exploited for the purposes of supporting the historically male general labour force (e.g. by allowing them to work longer, and presumably more productive hours). While the academy has historically sat to the side of the capitalist forces often targeted by Marxist feminist discourse (although this has, arguably, been changing in recent years), it appears just as guilty of exploiting the care labour of academic partners and families.

Given these circumstances, it is perhaps unsurprising that my study found several of the female academic trainees expressing concerns about how a potential future child might impact their academic careers. Indeed, several of the participants reported a relatively chilly climate surrounding children existing within their research groups, departments and faculties—particularly for women. Such a perception made the desire to want to start a family while also attempting to manage a successful academic training career appear, at least in some ways, to be a resistive act. Deeper exploration of the women's family decision-making, however, found that their desires were far more complicated. In particular, critical examination of the non-academic factors influencing the women found their family planning to also be conforming in nature—in that it often aligned with the traditional care role expectations for women that are frequently driven home by societal sources (e.g. religion, family, friends, cultural traditions, pronatalist ideology, expectations surrounding the institution of marriage). Thus, while I would certainly not contend that the women in my study were planning families under duress, nor that their desires for children were disingenuous, I would propose that they were impacted

by the seemingly opposing messages surrounding academic trainee motherhood being promoted through a variety of social avenues.

Perhaps in an effort to maneuver this deceptively political path, several of the female participants had devised strategies to help them achieve their goals—both professionally and personally—while also adhering to many of the social expectations placed on them as women. Some had made ‘deals’ with insistent family members to ensure that they were able to obtain some academic footing before pursuing marriage and parenthood. Others had dissected their long term academic plans to strategize suitable times to have a child so as to limit the impact childcare requirements might have on their progress. Still others had sought out mentors, role models, and institutional supports that might provide advice and resources to co-manage the roles of trainee and parent. While such actions arguably speak to the resourcefulness and dedication of these women, they also highlight the efforts many must resort to in order to ‘have it all’ in today’s society.

7.5.2.2 The Men’s Vantage Points

At various points throughout this project, I was confronted with the ways individuals had the potential to possess a shifting experience of advantage and disadvantage, depending on the topic being considered (Zinn & Dill, 1996). This was found to be particularly true for my study’s male participants, as they were individuals whose gender placed them within a historically privileged group within both society and the academy. While I was careful to keep myself open to the possibility that men could potentially experience gendered marginalization in relation to their academic training (and delved into this idea with many of the participants in our interviews together), I was unable to find strong evidence to support this notion in this project. Indeed, I attributed the lacking existence of a ‘male training experience’ in this study to the historical androcentric representation that has existed within the academy (Anderson & Mieztis, 1999; Huang, 2008; Mason, Wolfinger & Goulden, 2013; Wall, 2008). Put simply, the academic training experience has traditionally been a male experience and thus the participants did not perceive an experience of marginalization.

While the male participant’s academic experiences did not speak to subordination, many of their desires surrounding family did provide opportunities for potential marginalization

(e.g. desires to play an active or primary caregiving role to future children). In many ways, such family care aspirations could be argued to be misaligned with traditional, heterocentric family structures within the academy (e.g. men focused on academic work, women devoted to care work within the home) and, arguably, problematized their ability to demonstrate their masculinity in the ‘right’ ways (e.g. acting as breadwinners and the providers of financial security within families).

For example, in my critical analysis of the ways the men demonstrated their masculine identities through their academic work, there was evidence of some of the male participants reproducing stereotypical gender work/family role expectations for men (i.e. by demonstrating a careerist masculine identity focused on work over family). Others, conversely, resisted such expectations by demonstrating an enterprising masculine identity focused on balancing the demands of both work and family (O’Connor, O’Hagan & Brannen, 2015). While the latter of these two identities might be considered in line with more progressive, contemporary attitudes towards unpaid household labour and care divisions, the former is arguably more in keeping with traditional conceptions of research commitment and success within the academy by the vast majority of institutions (O’Connor, O’Hagan & Brannen, 2015). As a result, it could be suggested that those men who devoted themselves primarily to the role of ‘academic breadwinner’ were more likely to derive privilege (in the form of academic positions, publications, and research funding, and social praise) from their work role than those men who attempted to practice more of a work/family balance. Additionally, those men in my study who expressed a desire to forgo an expected breadwinner role to actively pursue a primary caregiving role for future children would likely derive even less privilege within society than those who chose to balance their work and family responsibilities.

Separate from issues of expected gender roles were isolated examples within the male participant group of the ways they could encounter marginalization in relation to academic parenthood. For example, I would argue the message embedded within societal pronatalist ideology that mothers should be the most important individuals in their children’s lives not only subjugates women, but also marginalized men who desire to be involved fathers, in that it conveys that their parental role will always take a backseat. While some might suggest that the diminished care responsibilities traditionally expected of men speaks to privilege (in that

men are frequently not expected to take on the bulk of the unpaid and often unrecognized care work in our society), I offer that it could also elude to marginalization for the male participants in my study who described strong desires to be involved, hands-on fathers.

Reflecting more deeply on the male participant narratives in my study, I have contemplated whether the site of my exploration with regard to parenthood (e.g. the decision-making phase) might have contributed to the more limited experiences with marginalization reported within this group. As many of our interviews together were focused on the process of family planning and were, at times, hypothetical in nature (e.g. how individuals and/or couples felt they might manage a work/family life with a child in the future; how they might divvy up household responsibilities after becoming parents), it could be argued that the men may have been less cognizant of their own encounters with marginalization—largely because they might have been more subtle and well-entrenched socially (e.g. the expectation that fathers were less important figures in a child’s life; that their primary role should be that of a breadwinner). Thus, it could be speculated that as the men moved further along in their parenthood journey and experiences turned from hypothetical to actual (i.e. once a child had arrived), the men’s perspectives might alter—particularly if they were in any way occupying a less traditional family role (e.g. a stay-at-home father).

Lastly, I think it is important to acknowledge that while the men in my study could not always articulate their own experiences with marginalization, many appeared critically aware of the ways women (in particular, their female partners) could be disadvantaged within the academic, the family, or society. As a result, these men were frequently able to bolster the experiences of subjugation expressed by the female participants and often provided useful levels of context for the women’s narratives. To me, this speaks to the potential for men willing to turn a critical eye to gender stereotypes and their own experiences of privilege to serve as allies to the feminist movement and to studies utilizing feminist standpoint theory. Indeed, the United Nation Women HeForShe campaign, launched in 2014, has sought to achieve this exact task by inviting men to become involved in considered conversations about gender inequity (UN Women, 2015).

7.5.3 Recommendations for Positive Change³

While there was evidence in this study of participant encounters with subjugation and oppression, the obstacles encountered by academic trainees/partners with family desires are certainly not insurmountable. Acknowledging that feminist researchers and methodologies are action-oriented and focused on affecting social change, I wish to end this chapter with some recommendations that could assist academic trainees and their families—present and future. These suggestions vary in their scope and have been developed using the stories not only from the participants in this study, but also investigations into trainee parenthood in other academic environments (Larkins, 2015; Leaman, 2015; Moreau & Kerner, 2012; Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009).

First and foremost, I would suggest that academic institutions work to foster university cultures—through the provision of resources and support—that normalize trainee parenthood on campus and provide trainee parents (or those considering parenthood) with a greater experience of acknowledgement (Larkins, 2015; Moreau & Kerner, 2012; Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009). Ideally, such resources would be visible to all individuals on campus (not just trainee parents) and would be promoted early in a trainee's time at the institution. For example, discussions about trainee parenthood and resources during orientation week activities for new graduate students could help to set an initial family-friendly tone. This message could subsequently be reinforced through campus resources specifically targeting parents, such as changing tables (in both the women's and men's washrooms) and private, lockable lactation rooms around campus (Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009). To further instill support, academic supervisors could be brought into the fold and provided with training in the resources available to student parents on campus (Larkins, 2015). Additionally, they could be provided with training about positive ways to discuss the topic of parenthood with trainees (e.g. trainee rights, supportive language and language to avoid, the importance, as an individual with power, of sometimes being the one to reach out first) and how to identify signs that a trainee may be approaching a state of burnout in order to potentially offer some

³ The content in section 7.5.3 has been derived, in part, from the following article: Chesser, S. (2015). Intersection of family, work and leisure during academic training. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 18(3), 308-322. It is being used with the express permission of the publisher.

assistance. Such changes would be relatively inexpensive to implement and could go a long way towards making trainee parents feel that they can add to the diversity represented within the academic experience.

Resources that would help to bring trainee parents (or future parents) together could also prove valuable, in that they would further normalize the existence of families on campus and provide students with encouragement and solidarity. Trainee parent support groups that operate either in-person or online (e.g. via forums, social media) have been one avenue for this type of resource suggested previously, as have parent resource centres that provide trainees and their partners with access to specialized supports (e.g. counselling, individuals with knowledge of policies and resources available to campus parents) (Moreau & Kerner, 2012; Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009). Such centres could also be suitable sites for the provision of support to trainee partners (e.g. support groups; leisure outings)—particularly for those partners who have recently relocated and are seeking social connections (Rains, 2015).

Institutional policies and programs designed to directly benefit academic trainee parents (i.e. subsidized on-site daycare, paid parental leave, and bursaries for student parents) could provide even deeper support to trainees and their families. Such resources provide students with increased flexibility with regard to their finances and increase their ability to fit their working schedules around the care needs of their children.

While resources are important, I would argue that policy and practical changes might also be necessary to allow trainee parents to be successful in both their personal and working lives. Flexibility with regard to when and where academic parents work could provide some assistance with the juggling of work and family, and could be particularly useful to trainees in the STEM fields who have traditionally had less flexible working arrangements. Extending this flexibility to graduate coursework (by making materials available online and/or providing the opportunity to attend tutorials remotely) would also assist trainee parents in the early academic years when their schedules are often more rigid due to course requirements (Moreau & Kerner, 2012). While individual support from supervisors related to ‘telecommuting’ (i.e. using the internet to work from home) or flexible hours has been a possibility for individual students in many faculties for some time, I would assert that greater institutional and

departmental support could help to make this type of arrangement more common. It should be noted, however, that this type of work-related flexibility also has the potential to ‘blur’ the boundaries between work and home for workers and could contribute to even greater levels of work/life imbalance if individuals are not cognizant of their schedules (Heijstra & Rafnsdottir, 2010).

Institutional flexibility in the ways trainees go about completing their work could be yet another way institutions and departments could assist academic trainee parents. For example, allowing both male and female graduate student parents to assume part-time statuses within their academic programs could allow for greater time to complete their training activities, while also allowing for increased time for both mothers and fathers to bond with their children. Despite there being evidence to suggest that part-time enrollment in North American graduate studies programs is increasing (Gardner, 2008), this status has been shown to be unpopular within some institutions, as it can impact the ability for students to receive and/or retain scholarships and graduate in a standard timeframe (Williams et al., 2006). Thus, for this recommendation to be implemented, there would need to be some institutional and funding-related flexibility in these areas.

Finally, I feel that academic trainee leisure could be an effective site for making changes that could benefit parents. Indeed, strategies such as creating more child-friendly academic social events (e.g. providing advanced notice of events to allow time for child care arrangements to be made; refraining from holding events in non-child friendly environments such as pubs or bars) or holding events during more regular working hours or on weekends (when childcare is often easier for parents to arrange) could help to ease some of the social isolation that may be experienced by trainee parents (Leaman, 2015; Wall, 2008).

7.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the narrative findings expressed by the participant couples in this study. It began with an exploration of the overall experience of the academic trainee participants, paying specific attention to related factors such as gender and leisure involvement. This logically extended into an examination of the academic training environment and the ways trainees, their partners, and their intimate relationships were

impacted by the academy's expectations and requirements. Having established this grounding for the reader, I then moved on to discuss participant couples' experiences with family planning. This involved exploration of such factors as desires and motivations for family, roles within the family, pressures, constraints, and supports, all of which focused on the ways that women, men and couples might handle such decision-making. This chapter ended with a consolidated telling of the women's and men's standpoints related to academic trainee family planning, in addition to some recommendations for positive change.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Inspired by my own experiences as a woman, trainee intimate partner, and doctoral student, this feminist standpoint research project has sought to uncover the factors that influence first-time family planning amongst academic trainee couples. Using the stories told during individual and group interviews with ten heterosexual trainee couples contemplating parenthood, it has provided insights into the experiences of doctoral and/or postdoctoral training, the complex intimate relationships between trainees and their partners, as well as the factors that influence decision-making about whether and when to start a family during academic training. The feminist insights gained through these interviews were used to create female and male partner narratives told in parallel which, at times, converged to reveal a shared narrative within the couples. While the participants' stories have taken centre stage in this work, I have also sought to position myself within this research through the sharing of key aspects of my own story at various points in time. In this concluding chapter, I articulate the main empirical, theoretical, and methodological findings brought forward by this research. I also outline the limitations associated with the project, as well as my recommendations for areas for future research.

Empirical findings from my study strongly support the notion of academic training as an emotionally complex and highly gendered experience, particularly for women. Participant narratives demonstrated that training could be a personally valuable site for enjoyment and intellectual pursuit, but could also serve as a strong source of stress that impacted individuals professionally and personally. Particularly for female trainees, family emotional labour responsibilities, in addition to stereotypes related to women's academic commitment and productivity were found to compound these stresses, often leading women to feel frustrated, unsupported, and/or inadequate. This finding further supports previous work that has highlighted the ways that female academics may be disproportionately impacted by the stresses associated with co-managing work and home stresses (Martinez, Ordu, Della Salla, Matthew & McFarlane, 2013; Paksi, 2015). However, my study has helped to make a novel contribution to this literature by not only identifying direct connections between academic trainee women's family planning and societal gender role expectations, but also through the

inclusion of understudied group perspectives (e.g. postdoctoral trainees, trainees enrolled at a Canadian university).

Interestingly, while gender was discovered to be a far less salient issue for the male trainees in my study (likely due to the traditionally male dominated composition of the academy), academic training was uncovered as a site for men to socially demonstrate their masculine identities. In particular, the findings from my study support the presence of multiple academic masculine identity constructions, each holding a differing level of commitment to career and/or family, as articulated by O'Connor, O'Hagan and Brannen (2015). These varying masculine academic identities; however, were found to hold differing levels of social capital for men, depending on which vantage point was being considered (e.g. from a secular or non-secular institutional perspective).

While graduate student leisure behaviours have only been minimally explored previously, my research found leisure playing a significant role in the work/life management of academic trainees and their intimate partners. This is an important finding, given that previous research has suggested that trainees who are unable to mitigate the pressures associated with their personal and professional lives may be at increased risk of leaving their programs (Golde, 2000; Maslach and Leiter, 2008; Wall, 2008). Several of the trainees in my study reported a work/leisure duality existing with regard to their training—an experience that might help to ensure that these individuals remain academically engaged, even when faced with hardships. For other trainees, leisure existed as a separate endeavour that was used to cope with the pressures of their training, particularly during periods of intense stress. Casual leisure outlets (as outlined by Stebbins, 2001b) were the predominant choice amongst these individuals and/or couples, in large part because they provided relatively easy and inexpensive opportunities to unwind, disconnect, and relax.

As trainee intimate partners have frequently been an overlooked population within explorations of academic experiences (Devonport & Lane, 2014), my study has brought important attention to the notion of doctoral and postdoctoral training as a family endeavour (Brannock, Litten & Smith, 2000). In particular, the practical and emotional supports often provided by intimate partners were found to be vital to the success of academic trainees—

helping them to manage professional and personal hardship as a unit. Academic training, however, was also demonstrated to be a venture that repeatedly required both large and small sacrifices on the part of significant others (e.g. relocation away from family and friends, financial changes, leisure time spent together as a couple), including circumstances related to the pursuit of parenthood.

In the years since I first began this project, increased research attention has been focused on trainee families—most frequently American doctoral trainee mothers (Bosch, 2013; Ellis, 2014; Estes, 2011; Holm, Prosek & Weisberger, 2015; Larkins, 2015; Leaman, 2015; Rahman, 2015; Sallee, 2015; Thomas, 2014). My study, which has included male, postdoctoral, trainee partner, international trainee, and Canadian trainee perspectives, makes a much needed contribution to this newly recognized area of inquiry by providing greater diversity with regard to narrative experiences. Additionally, as existing literature has predominately focused on the ways individuals manage academic training and life *after* becoming parents, my study has specifically concentrated on the factors that influence decision-making with regard to parenthood at both the individual and partnered level. Consequently, I have been able to devote specific critical attention to the multitude of factors that push and pull trainees couples in different directions with regard to their family planning.

Overall, my study's findings suggest that the family planning process for doctoral and postdoctoral trainee couples is exceedingly multifaceted and includes elements such as personal desires, roles within the family, internal and external pressures, academic and financial constraints, and supports both inside and outside the academy. While some of these factors were found to be highly gendered (e.g. women reported being far more impacted by pronatalist ideology than men), others were found to be more generalized or experienced by the couple as a unit (e.g. religious expectations). Various factors were also found to interact with one another to exacerbate family and/or training-related desires, pressures, or constraints.

Among the participant couples, traditional gendered roles with regard to parenthood and unpaid labour within the family were also found to be well entrenched, even within partnerships where women were challenging traditional roles through their paid work (e.g. women were engaged in academic training or were breadwinners). In particular, academic

trainee women appeared to devote concerted efforts to help ensure that their training would not be detrimentally impacted by motherhood. This often meant choosing to wait until after critical academic milestones had been completed (e.g. coursework, comprehensive exams) or until they had a more flexible working schedule and/or environment to grow their families. Male trainees appeared far less impacted by such concerns and, instead, were often more heavily focused on effectively carrying out the social expected role of being a steady and stable financial provider for their families.

From a theoretical perspective, this study has been able to demonstrate several of the tenets of feminist standpoint research and the value it can bring to critical knowledge of, and discussions about, inequity. First, my study was able to explore the topic of family planning critically—a basic requirement of feminist standpoint, and indeed all, feminist research (Crasnow, 2014; Harding, 1986; 1987). Moreover, as academic trainees—a group that has traditionally not held much power within the academy—have been relatively ignored until recently by much of the higher education and family studies literature, my study has been able to uncover new knowledge and experiences situated within the lives of a subjugated/marginalized group. This, according to Braidotti (2003) and Smith (1987), is another essential requirement of standpoint research. Additionally, by tending to the ‘common places’ associated with the telling of narratives (Clandinin, 2013), my study has been able to ensure that the participants’ knowledge was socially situated—another necessity of feminist standpoint research (Harding, 1993; 1998; 2003; 2007).

With regard to the potential expansion of theory, my study has demonstrated an innovative use of feminist standpoint theory—mainly, its potential to critically examine the knowledge and experiences of both women and men in relation to academic trainee family planning. To date, I have yet to locate any examples of a female researcher using standpoint theory to explore how the same issue impacts both women and men; consequently my research has helped to unearth a potentially new context for this decades old feminist theoretical approach. Specifically, my study has been able to demonstrate female experiences with subordination in relation to academic training and family planning, as well as men’s more limited experiences with marginalization, predominately in relation to parenthood desires and roles within the family. Consequently, it answers the call of feminist theorists

Harding (2012) and Wylie (2012) who have suggested that feminist research must expand its gaze to include any and all individuals who might be treated inequitably, while also acknowledging that individuals can possess both a privileged and marginalized status, depending on the context (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Furthermore, my research has established that a feminist standpoint approach could allow for the future inclusion of men's viewpoints in critical discussions about gender inequities experienced by both women, men, and couples.

This pioneering use of feminist standpoint theory to explore a topic that so often includes individual and partnered decision-making also necessitated that a unique representational approach be taken to the presentation of narrative findings. Drawing inspiration from the leisure literature and the duoethnography approach taken by Spencer and Paisley (2013), my study was able to demonstrate the ways women's and men's stories could visually be told separately, but in parallel on the same page. Additionally, when it was required, this representational strategy allowed readers to visually see the ways individual narratives could come together to form shared narrative elements within a couple. Thus, my study makes an innovative contribution—with regard to data representation—to contemporary feminist leisure literature (McKeown, 2015; Mulcahy, 2012; Spencer & Paisley, 2013).

While my study has unearthed several important findings, it was unfortunately not without some minor limitations. To begin, as mentioned previously, my participant recruitment efforts were only able to attract heterosexual couples looking to grow their families with biological children. Consequently, my study was unable to address the diversity that exists among Canadian and American families today—families that are increasingly including gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, step parents, single parents, or guardians (Statistics Canada, 2015a; DeParle & Tavernise, 2012). It is my sense that the inclusion of such families would almost certainly deepen our understanding of individual and couples' experiences of marginalization and/or subjugation with regard to academic family planning and parenthood.

Moreover, while I was tremendously excited to recruit three postdoctoral trainees for this project, I regret that I was not able to include greater representation of this group. As postdoctoral trainees have traditionally been an understudied group with regard to both their

personal and professional lives (Mitchell et al., 2013; Nerad & Cerny, 1999), it is my sense the increased inclusion of their narratives could have provided some novel insights not necessarily experienced by doctoral students (e.g. postdoctoral trainees are no longer able to access the tax exemption and many of the campus resources provided to graduate students, but do often possess greater levels of professional autonomy than doctoral students). In reality, however, this was a largely unavoidable limitation given the relatively small postdoctoral population currently employed at the research study site (i.e. only a few hundred individuals). Consequently, I would suggest that future research efforts to recruit more postdoctoral trainee families would likely require a larger and/or numerous recruitment sites, in addition to a longer recruitment period than was used in my research (i.e. four months).

These limitations aside, I feel strongly that my study provides numerous jumping off points for future research into areas related to trainee parenthood and trainee leisure. First and foremost, I would suggest that a more expansive study that explores similar issues to the ones in my study across a variety of institutions could provide deeper insights into the diverse experiences of trainee families. Indeed, the inclusion of university sites of varying student population sizes, in different types of communities or countries (e.g. large cities versus small communities; Canadian institutions versus those in the United States), with varying research foci (e.g. STEM institutions versus those focused more on the humanities and social sciences) and with differing institutional supports to assist trainee parents (e.g. paid parental leave bursaries or subsidized day care) could allow for comparisons between trainee family decision-making in a variety of settings. Such an inquiry could also highlight the ways individuals in certain universities might be helped or hindered in their family planning and work/life management by institutional factors.

While I was able to glean detailed and multidimensional stories from the participants in this study before they had added children to their families—and focus on these elements in great detail—follow up interviews with the participant couples at a further point in time could have uncovered deeper insights into the ways trainee families might co-manage their work and lives. Consequently, I also feel that subsequent explorations of academic trainee parenthood could benefit from a more longitudinal approach in their design. Specifically, I would suggest following participants through various phases of their parenting journey—perhaps beginning

in the family planning stage and extending to a year or so after a child's arrival. In addition to providing a more comprehensive telling of participant stories over a longer segment of their lives, this type of longitudinal strategy could allow for comparisons between anticipated experiences (i.e. provided before a child arrives) and actual experiences (i.e. provided after a child arrives). Indeed, such a strategy would also allow a researcher to delve more deeply into the challenges and obstacles that participants might or might not be able to see on the horizon (e.g. related to finances, free time, supervisor reactions and support), as well as some of the ways individuals and/or couples might go about coping with these issues.

In my study, I was intrigued by the number of participants (particularly women) who described being influenced in their decision-making by the experiences of their own academic parents (most frequently their mothers). Therefore, I believe that inquiry into the ways trainee parenthood experiences might impact multiple generations within a family could be a fascinating topic of future inquiry. Indeed, in-depth investigations into the ways past experiences with trainee parenthood influence the advice parents provide to their own trainee children could unearth the obstacles, triumphs, and strategies women across academic generations have encountered and employed in relation to their families.

Finally, the important roles that leisure was found to play in my study in the lives of academic trainees and their partners warrants a more focused investigation into this research area. Specifically, I would suggest exploring, on a deeper level than was possible in my study, the inner workings of the work/leisure duality that may exist for many trainees. Inquiry into the specific elements that, for some, make academic work feel leisurely, as well as the positive and potentially negative impacts this way of thinking could have on individuals and their families would, arguably, also have value for both trainees and their departments. Having summarized the major contributions of my dissertation work, as well as its limitations and future directions, I feel the only logical way to close this dissertation is to provide you, the reader, with an ending to my own story.

Chapter Nine: Epilogue

The following is one last excerpt from my journal:

Summer 2016, age 33, year six of my PhD

As a risk-averse child, I was never one to jump from the high diving platform at the local community pool. To be honest, the 10 metre drop into the chlorinated, used Band-Aid-filled pool below was a leap of faith that was simply beyond me at the time. The dangers, from my perspective, were always far too great. What if I belly-flopped? What if I plunged all the way to the bottom, never to return to the surface? What if I screamed...or cried...or looked silly and the other children laughed? On the days when I could muster the courage, I'd start the climb up the platform's winding concrete stairs, hanging on to the cold metal railing for dear life. Shrieking children would clamber past—their wet feet making squishing noises on the non-slip stair padding. With each step I climbed, however, my anxiety would intensify. My tiny heart would race inside my bright blue Speedo as I watched the children splashing in the pool below appear smaller and smaller. I never actually made it onto the top diving platform myself, but I would always marvel at the children who had the courage to take the plunge—daredevils willing to trust that they could dive in head first and survive the fall.

In the fantasy of how it would feel to write these final lines, I had always pictured having already taken the plunge into motherhood. But that's just not the way that my story, or Dave's story, or our story together has worked out. I've tried to justify the reasons behind our decision to wait to have a child, both to myself and to those around us but, if I'm honest, I'm still that little kid that needs to be sure I won't fail spectacularly before I jump. And, of course, I married the only other kid at the pool who was more risk-averse than myself. Still, at the end of the day, my own personal ethics dictate that if Dave and I are ever going to become parents, it will have to be an endeavour we dive into together.

I suppose in the context of the storied metaphor I have described above, this leaves the participants in my study as the brave daredevil children willing to take some calculated risk to experience the rewards that can come with parenthood. And yet, as I have learned through my follow up communication with these individuals, things did not always unfold as expected for them either. While the three pregnant couples gave birth to healthy children, others were forced to delay their parenthood plans due to unforeseen issues with work relocation (i.e. partners sometimes found themselves living on opposite sides of the province for a time). One alluded to difficulties conceiving that were still being worked out, while another had opted to quit his academic training altogether to find steady employment to support his ever growing

family. What has struck me about each couple, however, is their resolve to see their personal and professional dreams through—whatever they might be. Unfortunately, while the living of life on one's own terms can seem, on the surface, like a relatively straightforward endeavour, the complex and often inequitable circumstances in which academic trainees and their families make their decisions can complicate this process. Consequently, it is my hope that my dissertation work will inspire critical discussions and action with regard to the ways that we can make sure that the metaphorical pool of parenthood remain open for academic trainees and their families, should they ever decide that they want to dive in.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Email

Email Title: Participants Needed for Study on Family Planning During Doctoral/Postdoctoral Training

This email is being distributed to the GSO listserv on behalf of Stephanie Chesser, a doctoral student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo (supervisor: Dr. Diana Parry). It is intended to make you aware of a research project that is currently taking place on campus.

While research has steadily been produced over the past several decades on the topic of motherhood within the academy from the perspective of female faculty (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Evans & Grant, 2009; Huang, 2000; Kemkes-Grottenthaler, 2003; Kraus, 2002), very little attention has been paid to the specific factors that influence when and why doctoral students and postdoctoral trainees (both female and male) have children. The purpose of this study is to explore the decision-making surrounding becoming a first-time parent among couples where one or both partners are undertraining advanced academic training (i.e. a PhD or a postdoc). Consequently, we are seeking volunteer couples (of whom at least one individual is a doctoral or postdoctoral trainee) who are seriously considering, actively trying for, or are pregnant with their first child and who might be interested in discussing their thoughts and experiences.

Participation in this research study would involve one hour individual interviews with both you and your partner, as well as one interview as a couple. The individual interviews would focus on topics such as the experience of being an academic trainee (or the partner of one), feelings surrounding potentially becoming a first-time parent, and the factors affecting your decision-making about becoming a first-time parent (i.e. academic training, family, friends, society, culture). After completing these individual interviews, participants would then be asked to complete an interview with their partner. This interview should also last about an hour. This interview would focus on your relationship with your partner and how this is impacted by academic training, your motivations (as a couple) to potentially become first-time parents, and how your decision-making might be influenced by the pressures of an academic role or, perhaps, other academic parents you might know. In appreciation of your time, each couple will be given a \$25 gift card for Chapter/Indigo. We would like to make you aware that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee, however, the final decision regarding participation is entirely yours. If you and your partner would like any additional information or are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher at schesser@uwaterloo.ca

Kindest Regards,

Stephanie Chesser
PhD Candidate
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
schesser@uwaterloo.ca

FIRST-TIME PARENTHOOD IN DOCTORAL OR POSTDOCTORAL TRAINING

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

I am looking for volunteer couples interested in taking part in a study examining decision-making surrounding first-time parenthood among those enrolled in doctoral or postdoctoral training. Couples in which one or both partners are currently completing a PhD or postdoc AND are undertaking first-time parenthood (*i.e. pregnant with, seriously contemplating trying to conceive or adopt their first child*) are encouraged to contact the researcher for more information.

Participating couples would be asked to complete three interviews (*i.e. one interview with each partner individually, as well as one interview as a couple*).

Interviews are expected to take approximately one hour each.

In appreciation for their time, each couple will receive a \$25 gift card for Chapters/Indigo.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer,
please contact:

Stephanie Chesser
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

schesser@uwaterloo.ca

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through,
a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee

Appendix C: Participant Pre-Screening Guide

Hello, may I speak to [name of potential participant]. My name is Stephanie Chesser and I am a PhD student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. You or your partner [name of partner] contacted me expressing interest in participating in a project examining the factors affecting individual and couples' decisions-making about having a first child while enrolled in doctoral or postdoctoral training. Are you still interested in potentially participating in this project and, if so, would you be able to answer a few quick pre-screening questions to assess your suitability for this study? Just so that you are aware, should either you or your partner not feel that you are interested in becoming a parent at this time, you will not be asked to participate in the project.

Questions for Partner Who is a Doctoral Student or Postdoctoral Trainee

1. How old are you?
2. Are you currently in a committed relationship with your partner?
3. Why type of academic training are you currently engaged in (i.e. doctoral studies, postdoc)?
4. Do you currently have any children? (*this question need only be posed to one partner*)
5. Just so I have an idea, are you and your partner currently trying to conceive or adopt your first child or are you currently seriously contemplating becoming a first-time parent? Is this decision something that both you and your partner actively want?

Questions for Non-Student/Trainee Partner

1. How old are you?
2. Are you currently in a committed relationship with your partner? (*this question need only be posed to one partner*)
3. Do you currently have any children? (*this question need only be posed to one partner*)
4. Just so I have an idea, are you and your partner currently trying to conceive or adopt your first child or are you currently seriously contemplating becoming a first-time parent? Is this decision something that both you and your partner actively want?

Thank you very much for answering my questions.

Appendix D: Participant Information Letter

[Date]

Dear [Insert Name of Participant]:

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my doctoral degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Diana Parry. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part. While research has steadily been produced over the past several decades on the topic of motherhood within the academy from the perspective of female faculty (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Evans & Grant, 2009; Huang, 2000; Kemkes-Grottenthaler, 2003; Kraiss, 2002), very little attention has been paid to the specific factors that influence when and why doctoral students and postdoctoral trainees (both female and male) have children. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the decision-making surrounding becoming a first-time parent among couples where one or both partners are undertraining advanced academic training (i.e. a PhD or a postdoctoral fellowship).

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It will involve three separate interviews lasting approximately one hour in length each. For the first interview, I will speak with only one member of a couple (i.e. either yourself or your intimate partner). In the second interview, I will speak with the remaining member of the couple. These individual interviews are intended to provide participants with the opportunity to speak about their own personal motivations, concerns, and obstacles surrounding the possibility of parenthood during academic training separate from their partner. In the third interview, I will speak with both members of the couple together. The couple interviews are intended to explore exactly how the decision-making process surrounding first-time parenthood, academic training and work/family life is experienced as a partner unit. The interviews will take place in mutually agreed upon location and in a manner that best suits your comfort level and schedule (e.g. face-to-face, over the phone, or via Skype). You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences simply by advising the researcher. Attached you will find a guide for both the individual and couples interview to give you an idea of the topic areas to be covered. With your permission, interviews will be audio recorded to help facilitate the accurate collection of information. These audio files will be transcribed and will be provided to you for review (to ensure that you are comfortable with the information disclosed, and to give you the opportunity to provide feedback).

All of the information provided in the interviews is considered completely confidential and the university, your faculty and/or your department will not be made aware of your or your partner's involvement. Your name will not appear in any dissertation writings or reports resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used from your individual interview and attached to a pseudonym. Likewise, with permission from both you and your partner, anonymous quotations from the couple's interview will also be utilized. Data collected during this study will be retained for seven years in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. As remuneration for participation in this study, each couple will be provided with a Chapters/Indigo gift card valued at \$25.00.

Although no research project is without risks, care has been taken in this study to minimize them. One risk is that by participating, you may experience feelings about yourself, your partner, or your choices that you did not expect. Thinking about and responding to some of the interview topics may lead you or your partner to think about certain expectations or issues that you had not considered before, which in turn, could lead you to re-evaluate your decision-making in ways you may not have otherwise contemplated. However, discussing certain topics may also provide you and your partner with an opportunity for healthy exploration of values, feelings, and desires. A second risk, given the personal nature of some of the questions, is that you may feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics and you may not wish to talk about certain aspects of your relationship or your choices. If this were to occur, it is anticipated that such reactions would only be temporary. You will not be pressured to provide

a response to any of the topics we might discuss, and you should feel free to decline a response simply by saying 'pass' during an interview. You should also be aware that you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript from each interview that you participate in to make sure that you are comfortable with the content we discussed. Finally, you may also cease participation in this study at any time without worry of negative repercussions.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at schesser@uwaterloo.ca You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Diana Parry at (519) 888-4567 ext. 33468 or by email at dcparry@uwaterloo.ca I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo; however, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of the Research Ethics Office at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

I hope that the results of this study will provide greater insight into the choices surrounding the timing of first-time parenthood among doctoral and/or postdoctoral trainees and their partners. For the participants, it is my hope that this study will provide an opportunity for personal reflection and, perhaps, open up a dialogue within couples.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance with this project.

Kindest Regards,

Stephanie Chesser
PhD Candidate
University of Waterloo
schesser@uwaterloo.ca

Dissertation Supervisor
Diana Parry, PhD
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
dcparry@uwaterloo.ca
(519) 888-4567 ext. 33468

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Stephanie Chesser of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the dissertation and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Witness Name:

Witness Signature:

Appendix F: Interview Guide for Doctoral/Postdoctoral Trainee Participants

I would first like to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. As we have discussed before, the purpose of this project is to examine the factors affecting individual and couples' decisions-making about having a first child while enrolled in doctoral or postdoctoral training. It is my hope that your participation in this project will help to fill in gaps in some of the gaps in the literature related to graduate student and postdoctoral trainee experiences. During this interview, I would like to explore topics such as your experience of being an academic trainee (and all of the expectations that might come along with this role), how you balance work and life, your feelings surrounding potentially becoming a first-time parent, and the factors affecting your decision-making (i.e. family, friends, society, and culture).

As you know, you have signed a consent form to participate in this study and can be assured that your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. Neither the university, nor individual departments, will be made aware of your or your partner's participation. Additionally, I would like to assure you that I will not bring up anything that you discuss here today with your partner in their individual interview or in the couples interview.

This is an active interview, which means that we both be equal partners in creating meaning with regard to what we discuss today. I do not have any specific questions for this interview but have instead created a few topic areas (based on the research questions) that I am hoping we can discuss together. If there are any subject areas that you are uncomfortable with, please simply say 'pass' and we can move on to a different topic. I would also like you to be aware that you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript from each interview that you participate in to make sure that you are comfortable with the content we discussed. As you know, your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without judgement or consequences. Finally, if you feel comfortable, I would encourage you to discuss some of the topics we might discuss today with your partner when you get home.

Are there any questions or items that you would like to talk about before we begin?

Topics of Conversation

Can you tell me about the experience of being a graduate student/postdoc? Take me through your day-to-day (or semester-to-semester) experience.

Can you discuss any challenge/expectations placed on academic trainees and whether you think these are experienced differently by men versus women?

Can you tell me about your work/life division and how this is working for you?

Why do you want to become a parent at this point in your life? (i.e. please take me through your hopes and dreams for parenthood).

Are there internal or external factors influencing YOUR decision-making regarding becoming a first-time parent (i.e. factors that are separate from those experienced by your partner)?

Examples Family? Friends? Culture? Society?

Anything that we have not touched on that you feel is important or would like to discuss?

Appendix G: Interview Guide for Non-Trainee Participants

I would first like to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. As we have discussed before, the purpose of this project is to examine the factors affecting individual and couples' decisions-making about having a first child while enrolled in doctoral or postdoctoral training. It is my hope that your participation in this project will help to fill in gaps in some of the gaps in the literature related to graduate student and postdoctoral trainee experiences. During this interview, I would like to explore topics such as your experience being the partner of an academic trainee, your feelings and decision-making surrounding potentially becoming a first-time parent, and the factors affecting this decision-making (i.e. your partner's training, family, friends, society, culture).

As you know, you have signed a consent form to participate in this study and can be assured that your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. Neither the university, nor individual departments, will be made aware of your or your partner's participation. Additionally, I would like to assure you that I will not bring up anything that you discuss here today with your partner in their individual interview or in the couples interview.

This is an active interview, which means that we both be equal partners in creating meaning with regard to what we discuss today. I do not have any specific questions for this interview but have instead created a few topic areas (based on the research questions) that I am hoping we can discuss together. If there are any subject areas that you are uncomfortable with, please simply say 'pass' and we can move on to a different topic. I would also like you to be aware that you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript from each interview that you participate in to make sure that you are comfortable with the content we discussed. As you know, your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without judgement or consequences. Finally, if you feel comfortable, I would encourage you to discuss some of the topics we might discuss today with your partner when you get home.

Are there any questions or items that you would like to talk about before we begin?

Topics of Conversation

What is your experience of being a partner of a doctoral student or postdoctoral trainee?

Why do you want to become a parent at this point in your life? (i.e. please take me through your hopes and dreams for parenthood).

Are there internal or external factors influencing YOUR decision-making regarding becoming a first-time parent (i.e. factors that are separate from those experienced by your partner)?

Examples Family? Friends? Culture? Society?

Has your partner's training influenced your decision-making regarding potentially becoming a first-time parent at this point in your lives?

Anything that we have not touched on that you feel is important or would like to discuss?

Appendix H: Interview Guide for Couples

I would first like to thank you both again for participating in your first interviews and for agreeing to meet with me again today. Just as a reminder, the purpose of this project is to examine the factors affecting individual and couples' decisions-making about having a first child while enrolled in doctoral or postdoctoral training. It is my hope that your participation in this project will help to fill in gaps in some of the gaps in the literature related to graduate student and postdoctoral trainee experiences. During this interview, I would like to explore your relationship and how this is impacted by academic training, your motivations (as a couple) to potentially become first-time parents, and how your decision-making might be influenced by the pressures of an academic role or, perhaps, other academic parents you might know.

As you know, you have both signed a consent form to participate in this study and can be assured that your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. Neither the university, nor individual departments, will be made aware of your or your partner's participation. This is an active interview, which means that we all be equal partners in creating meaning with regard to what we discuss today. I do not have any specific questions for this interview but have instead created a few topic areas (based on the research questions) that I am hoping we can discuss together. If there are any subject areas that you are uncomfortable with, please simply say 'pass' and we can move on to a different topic. In the event that one partner would like to speak to a specific topic and the other partner would like to pass, I will simply move onto the next topic area. Just as a reminder, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript from each interview that you participate in to make sure that you are comfortable with the content we discussed. Please remember that your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without judgement or consequences. As mentioned previously, I will not be providing any advice or recommendation regarding parenthood in this study. However, if you both feel comfortable, I would encourage you to continue some of the discussions we might have here today privately at home.

Are there any questions or items that you would like to talk about before we begin?

Topics of Conversation

Can you tell me about your relationship as partners? For example, how did you meet? What sorts of things do you like to do together?

Can you tell me about the effect [trainee's name]'s doctoral/postdoctoral status has had on your live together as a couple and the time you are able to spend together?

Why do you want to become first-time parents at this point in your lives (i.e. the motivations, the driving forces, and/or any gendered pressures you might be experiencing)?

Has [trainee's name]'s academic training impacted your decision-making surrounding becoming a parent

Can you tell me about other graduate student/postdoctoral trainee parents you know and what advice they might have shared with you regarding combining academic training with parenthood?

Anything that we have not touched on that you feel is important or would like to discuss?

Appendix I: Resource List Provided to Participants

University of Waterloo Resources (available to doctoral students and some postdocs)

UW Counselling Services: (519) 888 4567 x 32655

Local Community Counselling

Catholic Family Counselling Centre: (519) 743-6333

Family Counselling Centre of Cambridge and North Dumfries (519) 622-9394

Lutherwood Family Counselling Services: (519)-622-1670 Ext. 200

Useful Readings for Graduate Students

Anaya, L., Glaros, A., Scarborough, I., Tami, N. (2009). Single parenthood and the PhD journey. *Anthropology News*, September

Wall, S. (2008). Of heads and hearts: Women in doctoral education at a Canadian university. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31, 219-228.

Asselin, G. (2008). Balancing personal and educational priorities. *Anthropology News*, September

Lynch, K. (2002). An immodest proposal: Have children in graduate school. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Useful Reading for Postdocs

Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars: [Click here for article](#)

Useful Readings Related to Parenthood and the Academy

Connelly, R., Ghodsee, K. (2011). *Professor Mommy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers

Evans, E., Grant, C. (2009). *Mama PhD*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Marotte, M., Reynolds, P., Savarese, R. (2011). *Papa PhD*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press

Monosson, E. (2010). *Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory: Female Scientists Speak Out*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

Schnitzer, D. (2003). *The Madwoman in the Academy: 43 Women Boldly Take on the Academy*. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.

Appendix J: Abbreviated Resource List (provided to non-participants)

Useful Readings for Graduate Students

- Anaya, L., Glaros, A., Scarborough, I., Tami, N. (2009). Single parenthood and the PhD journey. *Anthropology News*, September
- Wall, S. (2008). Of heads and hearts: Women in doctoral education at a Canadian university. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31, 219-228.
- Asselin, G. (2008). Balancing personal and educational priorities. *Anthropology News*, September
- Lynch, K. (2002). An immodest proposal: Have children in graduate school. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Useful Reading for Postdocs

Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars: [Click here for article](#)

Useful Readings Related to Parenthood and the Academy

- Connelly, R., Ghodsee, K. (2011). *Professor Mommy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers
- Evans, E., Grant, C. (2009). *Mama PhD*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Marotte, M., Reynolds, P., Savarese, R. (2011). *Papa PhD*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press
- Monosson, E. (2010). *Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory: Female Scientists Speak Out*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
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Appendix K: Participant Email Requesting Use of External Transcriptionist

Hello [Insert Name of Participant],

I would like to once again thank you for your participation in this study entitled Diapers and dissertations? An exploration of doctoral and postdoctoral trainee decision-making surrounding first-time parenthood. This project was extremely successful with its data collection (over 40 hours of audio recordings), which has made it extremely difficult for me to adhere to my initial timelines for transcription. Consequently, I will be hiring a third-party transcriber to help with this process. After consulting with the Centre for Critical Qualitative Health Research at the University of Toronto, I have located an experienced transcriber, Pauline Raghubir, who comes highly recommended by many academic researchers. Pauline's transcription company, PCR Office, is based out of Toronto.

I am writing to request your permission to use Pauline for the purposes of transcribing both your individual and couples interviews. You should be aware that Pauline will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement before receiving any interview audio files from me. Should you feel uncomfortable with this third-party transcriber, either for one or both of your interviews, please let me know and I can simply put the required files aside and continue transcribing them myself.

I would encourage you to speak to each other about his matter and if you have any questions, or would like to discuss things further, please feel free to email me at schesser@uwaterloo.ca.

Additionally, should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca

Sincerely,

Stephanie Chesser
PhD Candidate
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
schesser@uwaterloo.ca

Appendix L: Follow up Correspondence with Participants

Hello [Insert Name of Participant],

While it has been a while since we were last in touch, I would like to once again thank you for your participation in this study entitled *Diapers and Dissertations: An exploration of doctoral and postdoctoral trainee decision-making surrounding first-time parenthood*. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to examine factors affecting women's, men's, and couples' decisions-making about having a first child when one or both partners are enrolled in doctoral or postdoctoral training. It is my hope that the data obtained from this project will help to fill in gaps in some of the gaps in the literature related to graduate student and postdoctoral trainee experiences.

As discussed previously, I wanted to ensure that you and your partner had the opportunity to review the transcripts from your interviews as well as some preliminary findings. At your earliest convenience, please review the attached information and feel free to contact me regarding any questions or comments you might have (e.g. if you are uncomfortable with any of your disclosures and would like them altered or removed; would like to offer some commentary related to my analysis). Additionally, please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. This feedback, though useful for deeper analysis and writing purposes, is not absolutely essential, so please do not feel pressure to complete this task if you do not have time and/or would prefer not to.

Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving a full summary of the results, please let me know, and when the study is completed (anticipated by December 2016), I will send you this information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me via email. As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca. If you have any questions or comments for my supervisor, Dr. Diana Parry, please contact her at 519-888-4567 ext. 33468 or dcparry@uwaterloo.ca.

Kindest Regards,

Stephanie Chesser
PhD Candidate
University of Waterloo
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
schesser@uwaterloo.ca

Analysis and Transcript Explanation

The Analysis of Your Interviews:

This project involves the use of a methodology called narrative inquiry for the analysis of your interview data. By utilizing this methodology, I am essentially looking to rebuild the ‘story’ of your live together as couple and your decision-making process surrounding parenthood at this time in your lives. In the writing of my research findings, I will be utilizing the information that you and your partner shared in your interviews to help retell your story in a more linear fashion than likely occurred in the interviews (since we had a tendency to jump around between different points of your life/lives). My hope is that this particular analysis method will help to better bring your interview data to life.

In reading these transcripts, you may notice that segments of text are highlighted with various colours (i.e. coded). These codes will be used as ‘guideposts’ around which to rebuild your narratives. Below you will find a legend for this coding strategy:

Yellow – elements of your life as a trainee or trainee partner now

Cyan – internal motivators for family planning (note that these often blend with external motivators)

Green – external motivators for family planning (note that these often blend with internal motivators)

Magenta – elements of how your trainee life might operate in the future, if you were to have a child

Red – general descriptive information

What I am Requesting from You:

Attached you will find transcripts from your individual interview and the interview you completed with your partner. As we discussed, all information that could readily identify you or your partner (including your specific department and/or research topic) has been removed. If you have time and feel comfortable, please review these and provide me with any feedback that you see fit. Additionally, if you would like additional steps taken to anonymize your transcript, please let me know.

Once again if you have any questions at all about this process, please do not hesitate to contact me at schesser@uwaterloo.ca. Additionally, if you would like to see some specific examples of narrative inquiry in action in research, please let me know and I can provide you with some examples.

Thanks so much again for all of your help with this research,

Stephanie

Appendix M: Comprehensive Narratives for Divya and Anish

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Divya, age 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

I spend the whole day at the university—until 6 o'clock. Then I am preparing both of us dinner. As soon as Anish comes home, we put in a movie [laughs]. The rest of my cooking is in front of the movie. So every day from the day we were married, we have been watching one downloaded movie per day [laughs]. By 9:30 p.m. we will be done our dinner and our movie. Saturdays we go to the mall to go window shopping. Sundays we will wake up very late and go to church mass. It's a must since we are Christians. I also like to clean my home once a week on the weekends. I sweep, I mop. I clean up.

Stephanie: Quite the regimented schedule with a lot of unpaid household work...

It's a woman's duty in our culture [laughs]. That's my family's tradition. It's the girls who clean the house, do the cooking and husbands help sometimes. Inside my culture, I need to take care of my family. I don't think anybody in my lab is doing this kind of schedule at home. I'm also taking care of my family and I'm taking care of my husband's family by having funds for things. Like, we funded for my younger brother and his education. If I was not married, I wouldn't need to think about any of these things, just

Anish, age 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Usually I start around 8:30 a.m. and mostly I stay to 6 p.m. I mean, it can go up to 7 p.m., 7:30 p.m., or 8:00 p.m. When I was doing my PhD, I used to stay late, but I mean at that time I was not married, so I could come in any morning to catch up. I used to be a workaholic actually, during my PhD. At that time, I had a yearning to finish something in a certain time but now, I prefer to keep everything in the lab. I'm trying to be more optimized with my time, now that I have a family—Divya.

Stephanie: Had you given Divya fair warning about that working schedule before you got married?

Yes. I wanted to know what our frequency was. Could we work together to survive, you know? Because as far as I understood, having the PhD and then doing the posdoc-ing life wouldn't be very easy. Divya already had some experience and exposure towards that too—when she was doing her master's project. So I thought, at least maybe we had more of a chance to move forward and manage together with our shared way of

Divya, age 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

go sit and study and come back and sleep—that's it. I have to take care of my husband, my home. It's the work I need to do as a woman.

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

The first thing: my age. I know that as you get older, the chances of getting genetic diseases for a baby are higher. The main motivator is that, because I want my kids before I'm 35. Our marriage happened in 2011 when I was 29. Children were not that much of a matter at that time, but now I'm 32. It's been years and Anish and I think that if we wait to have a baby until after my PhD is over, it will be too late.

By this December, I can propose my doctoral project. So next year we can think of a baby. Many of my husband's colleagues—two of them are having their first child—have told us that it would be a nice time to have a baby once the coursework is done and comps are over.

So that was a motivation, and I think because during my PhD, we are not under as much pressure. I have seen that postdoc life is also okay...we could bring up children then, but

Anish, age 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

understanding. That's very important, otherwise it wouldn't be easy to go into her bed [everyone laughs, including Divya].

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Once you have kids—of course you can study for a PhD. Like Divya, after having kids she could go to school again—it's more difficult though. So we're thinking, and we have a mutual agreement about this, that she should get her PhD finished, or mostly finished, before kids. Usually she agrees with that one, but she goes back and forth [laughs]. Because I think she was the first one to have parents asking about why we don't have a baby yet. I came and said “no, studying is the first thing”. So I think I have been a bad influence [laughs].

Stephanie: Or a good influence I suppose, depending on whose interests you are considering...

I think that maybe I didn't get as much pressure as her from outside. Nobody could influence me by saying, “you shouldn't do that, you should do this”. I would say “I want

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

there is no financial or job security in that time. That's a big deal. Right now I am funded for four years no matter what happens.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

Back in India, my female classmates in school—they all had children, but Anish and I are still in a place where we're just thinking of having children. I'm 32. Many of my classmates have 10-year-old kids. So there have been trade-offs in our lives for education. The two years when I was trying to get into a PhD program were hard because I was struggling and I was not getting anywhere. We were travelling and our families couldn't tell what I was doing. Now that I have started my PhD, the questions are less. I mean the ladies in our families will ask, but I say "I am doing my coursework, so I can't".

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

to do this next" Now, nobody can force me to or ask me to have a baby or not have baby. I mean, Divya can force me. She can actually influence me, but others can't.

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

If I did not get married then I would get criticized by many people because there must be something wrong with me, you know? I've been married for four years now. I'm sure there are many people around, even in my family, asking "why no kids...oh is there some problem?"

Stephanie: The pressure you are receiving from your families seems pretty intense...

We told our families very clearly and frankly “if you ask about a baby, nothing will happen. If you keep asking, we will stop calling.” So, they stopped asking [both laugh]. Both of our fathers never ask those questions—only our mothers were asking because they tell each other and they talk. They gossip together. Our families realized that our studies were more important. So the two of us, we kind of go as one when dealing with our families. That's the purpose of family right...of marriage.

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

People just have the concept that you grow up, get a job, marry, have children. That's just life. That's the common scenario. Our families will call now and they are thinking that either me or Anish have a problem. They will say “oh visit your doctor, a gynaecologist, and see what's wrong with you or your husband” [laughs].

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

If the pressure is too much from the family then Divya may just simply quit the PhD. I don't know how much pressure she can take. Whether I take it, or she takes it—but if she can't take it, then it's not right. I want to give her a chance to succeed at this work before a baby.

Stephanie: Does your religion or do certain religious teachings impact your decision-making?

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

The Christian religion is based on family. We were born as Christians and so, with a child, we are bringing it up with the concept that the family means father, mother and kids. In the Christian community, we will look odd if we don't have a kid. They think that those who don't have kids are bad persons in the world. Our marriage was held in the church and there were four priests. So every wedding anniversary, we call them. This

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

I try to keep my religion separate as much as I can, but my brother is actually a Catholic priest. I am really spiritual, but I try to make it not influence me too much.

Stephanie: So is family an important part of a spiritual life for you then?

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

is the fourth time that we have called them and each time, the only question (laughs), “where is the kid? We cannot tell that you're successful without that piece”.

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

Stephanie: So what if you and Anish decided that you were too busy with your academic careers to have a child?

If that is an option, then my parents will not consider me [laughs]. If I don't have a kid, it means I can't go back to my country. All my cousins, all my friends—they all have kids. I cannot imagine without life without kids. Kids are always blessings. Being a mother, that is our pride and prestige and privilege. Being a Christian means you cannot think that. I cannot think of a family without kids

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

That's the purpose of getting married in Christian culture. That part I agree with.

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Divya, 32, first year doctoral trainee, health sciences discipline

My mother-in-law used to tell me “I’m ready to take care of your child”. I told her “I don’t want you to take my child from me. I want it to grow up with us”. So then she told me, “okay, then I will take care of your family”. So my hope is that she could come to Canada and help. If she’s not coming, then I will do what Anish’s lab mates did. They are mothers and they said they did one year of maternity leave and then they sent their children to daycare at the university.

Stephanie: Do you think your supervisor would have any concerns?

I have two postdocs in my lab who have babies now. One was on maternity leave last year—another was on maternity leave this year, so I don’t think he has any problem with that. Once my research protocol is ready, we just need to do the data collection, which only takes two weeks. So after that, all the time is for analyzing data. Saturdays I can sit and do the analysis, so if the baby is there I don’t think it’s such a big care to manage.

Anish, 36, upper year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

As far as I understand it the university, PhD students can take maternity leave, so we are hoping that maybe that may be useful because we will require it.

Stephanie: Would you want to take any time off yourself?

Well, that depends on what my professor says. I can’t be too flexible. I have to be in the lab to do my work. I have to get my hands on things. Divya doesn’t have to a lot of the time.

In the family though, the mother is probably the most important role. Men are just supporting them [laughs]. She does everything and I’m the person that does the paid job. But you have to have a balanced way of doing things in the family, otherwise Divya’s trying to grow up kids by herself. It would be a nightmare. I’m hoping that I can find some permanent placement or postdoc position, otherwise we would need to have some assistance from somebody. As long as we think that we can survive, we are okay with that [smiles]. My personal view is that I shouldn’t ask anybody that’s all. I can manage on my own with Divya’s support.

Appendix N: Comprehensive Narratives for Vivian and Peter

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

Peter's always been extremely, extremely supportive. The last three weeks, for example, Peter's been—like usually he does dishes and I do cooking. Overall, I think as far as division of labour in the house goes, it's good. But lately he's been doing all of it because I just don't have time. I tend to go through periods where my personal life is awesome and then my doctoral work doesn't happen. Or my personal life is non-existent and lots of doctoral work happens. I find it very difficult to strike a balance and maintain my equilibrium.

Peter, age 26, partner

I didn't know anything about this city when I moved here for Vivian. I kind of struggled actually. I had to make a big change to the amount of down time I usually prefer to have for myself. It's also common for me to bring home work. I'll typically only have time to do schoolwork in the evenings because I work all day and on the weekends, so that really cuts into the time Vivian and I might spend together. I mean she usually does her dissertation when I'm working in the mornings, and then evenings and weekends she'll try to finish up her marking or prepare for her course she teaches. We hang out...working together.

We just work all the time—we try to make it fun. Like when we are cleaning the house, cooking, or catching up on marking or school work. Don't we sound wonderful? We don't really hang out and we just clean our house and try to make food [both laugh]. Please don't judge us. It's sad.

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

I don't really socialize with my department—I socialize with my friends. I keep it separate, as separate as I can. When I do go to departmental events, I'm not going to be as free with myself in my speech and my ideas as I would be when talking to Peter, for example. I will adopt a more academic tone. I'm not going to drink. I don't really drink anyway, but I wouldn't if I was going out with a group of professionals in my field. Quite frankly, my department's get-togethers at the peer level are always drinking events—always. I just kind of look at it and think this is not the way that I wish to spend my time, because I have such a limited amount of time to begin with.

Peter, age 26, partner

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

I've known from when we met that Peter wanted to be a dad. I just wanted to do my own thing. I didn't want to be tied down. I remember asking him “why do you want to have children”, because I was like “I don't get it”. For me, due in part to what I study, kids are very scary considering what we might be facing environmentally, even in the next 20 years. So Peter's response was “I just want more of you in the world”. So then I thought about it and said “I want more of you in the world too”.

Peter, age 26, partner

We talked about having kids a year ago. We thought maybe soon after we get married—very traditional sort of thing.

Stephanie: So the timing is important?

Oh yeah, like especially with us both being in school still. If I don't have time now, how am I going to have time to take care of kids? I would need to be up all night. I want my partner to have a career and part of that might mean us not having kids when we're 20

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

The fact of the matter is that *I'm old. I'm 35. So if they're going to happen biologically, there's just a certain amount of time available for that. I was sick for a long time too. That's the other thing that has made it more possible now is that my body is actually functioning. I mean I couldn't even describe to you all things that were wrong, but I don't think for a minute my body could have supported a child. I think I was briefly pregnant. Like I did have a positive test which was a few years back but now.*

Stephanie: Things just didn't take?

Yeah, physical climate, just didn't work out, [Vivian tears up]. I feel afraid that if I don't try soon I might not be able to. I think age more than anything has got me thinking about pregnancy, more for the health of a baby than anything else.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

I mean as a female body socially, you are everybody's property. I mean, Peter's mother is forever saying "nice women have children... aren't families wonderful? Little children

Peter, age 26, partner

or 25. I mean people are having kids later and later, into middle age. Some women are having children later so they can have that career.

I think the academic system has also changed. Academics used to be better funded or they didn't have to work outside jobs. In the past, mostly men did PhD programs and their wives, if they were married, would be the one who could do all this other life stuff. The only job they had to do was their dissertation. Maybe they could have kids then because they had a stay-at-home partner. You know, you need time to do a dissertation.

Stephanie So are you concerned that if you had a child before she's done...

She might just leave the program. I don't want her to finish her program if she doesn't want to, but she does want to. I want to just kind of help her through those priorities.

Peter, age 26, partner

A lot of men are concerned about their legacy. When they die, they want a version of them around. I'm not as motivated by that—I think not as much as most men. I don't

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

really show you what matters...some people just work too hard all time and think it's all about them". I think there's a lot of social pressure. There's a lot of pressure on people who don't have children to explain why they don't have children. I think that's kind of weird because it shouldn't really be the default position. Whether they're a mother or not a mother, women are in this tenuous position whereby they have to fulfill certain social expectations or they're a defective human. In either role they still end up being judged.

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

Peter, age 26, partner

think many or any men would ever admit that. But you can really see it if you watch how men treat their kids; whether they treat them like people or just mini-versions of themselves.

What about your friends? Are you influenced by them?

I think that would be more Vivian. Not many of my friends are actually having kids right now. I'd probably be the first. I do have a niece (my sister is four years older), but I think that's influenced Vivian more than it's influenced me. Vivian's kind of hit that "all of my friends and all my siblings have kids" period. She will say "let's have cute kids of our own".

Stephanie: How do you think you might manage parenthood and an academic trainee role?

Vivian, age 35, fifth year doctoral student, humanities discipline

I am very protective of my time and I think that that will serve me well if we do become parents. I like to have that time with the people that I want to have my time with. I don't like to waste it and I feel like it's super precious. Peter and I, we're still a family and you have to do that family time. You have to be together to make things work.

I know that my supervisor would be supportive, but I also know that he would be concerned about dealing with the other departmental levels. I have heard so many negatives from people who were having children in my department. They were being told that it was a bad idea. In my department, whenever anyone gets pregnant it's "if you were a serious doctoral student, you wouldn't have done that". I think that regardless of doctoral work, you have to be able to have a life too. I don't think it's fair to be punished for wanting to have a family.

I think that the assumption is that when you take on this role of parent that you're giving up all other roles. I don't think that's fair. I mean what other role does a person take on where they're expected to not have any other life but that particular role? I can't think of any. People that get to this point in their studies are already very capable and they've already been balancing a lot of things for a long time—finances, academics, a partner or kids. It just really bothers me that the assumption is that "well it's your own fault if you decide to have children and then you're not successful".

Peter, age 26, partner

I think really for us it just comes down to time, like do you have the time and how are you going to make the time or schedule yourself so that you're going to have time? Are we going to hire someone to help us, or is one of our parents going to be available to help us? I have a great union with my job and could take parental leave, so that's awesome. I'm sure we will have to figure out daycare if we're both working. I want to be able to help as much as I can... I don't want to just put that on Vivian. I think employers don't expect men to take a leave.

Appendix O: Comprehensive Narratives for Sophia and James

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

It's challenging to support my mom (who is aging) and to balance a busy schedule at home, and to commute. So the commute between here and my mom's place is an hour, and between home and the university is at least an hour. A lot of time is spent in transit.

I feel like we, as women, have to prove ourselves all the time—at work and in our personal lives. We're always on. No matter what we do, I feel like there's going to be a stereotype that we fall into or we'd be reinforcing something in somebody's mind. I think the stereotypical roles that existed in the 60s still linger. I think gender roles do exist, even when it comes to getting ready in the morning. You think of your typical family morning routine, like who thinks of making lunches the night before? Who thinks of how everyone is going to get to work? Who thinks of scheduling? Who thinks of you know synchronizing each other's calendars? It's not James. It's definitely me who is making sure that the garbage is put out on garbage day. A lot of compromises are made now because I am not the main earner in this house and I have to consider that. I feel that a lot of the pressure is put on me to be successful so that I can be a contributing member of this household.

James, early 30s, partner

With PhD students, there's almost a free spirit about them, an understanding that there's something else better out there. Like you, for example, your research, your work and the meaning that it has for you personally. It's almost like you're in on something really good and the rest of us are not. But, it's also not like a 9 to 5 job where you can punch in and punch out. It's something that's with you. But Sophia and I do have those frank moments where we have to be honest with one another. I tell her “you have to be careful...you don't want to take on the world”. You do have your personal limits too, but as long as [pause], as long as one: you're healthy. Two: your body is getting the attention it deserves...go for it. That's kind of my attitude.

One thing I admire a lot about Sophia is the pure passion she has for what she does. When you see that you have to really smile and appreciate it, because it's rare. You can see that in her—in the fierceness in which she attacks her work. I find people can struggle just to get out of bed in the morning, but when you have that purpose or that passion it's very easy. When I'm in her realm, I really try to open myself up and understand. I think

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

Stephanie: After all that, do you find that you have any time left for leisure?

You have leisure moments which you hold on to for dear life when you're getting through the roughest of rough days. Those moments are just, at this point, few and far between. I mean there are points where you can decide, "heck I'm taking a week off and there's nothing anybody can say about it", which is something that I love but I feel like in this stage where I feel like I'm almost behind my cohort—I feel that that's not a possibility for me at this point.. James and I, we take our passions incredibly seriously and we marry ourselves to them and it's hard to define that line between, "oh yeah, I'm just analyzing data" versus "I'm really interested in this and I'm trying to explore it for my own personal knowledge and growth".

I think since we started dating, James has found attraction in my commitment to my work. When we first started dating I was finishing up my master's. The work almost killed me. James is a workaholic so he respected that about me. He doesn't really work a 9 to 5 either. He can be up until 2 o'clock in the morning doing the same thing. So we encourage each other in that way. It's not always the healthiest option, like we do lose our sleep. We do miss these other things, but I think that we've found solace in knowing

James, early 30s, partner

it kind of helps me understand her life and the things that she's going through. So I think it helps, makes me a better person, a better spouse.

Stephanie: So you're learning her academic language, so to speak?

When she does hit those blocks or when she does have those moments where she needs help and I'm the one around, I just don't put my arms up and say, "sorry I don't understand the things that you go through". Like with her master's, it's hard to put into words, watching her go through that. I watched her write it, and I watched her have some very high highs and then when the writer's block hit, some really low lows.

It's not like any other job that way, I guess is what I'm trying to say. There are some great things that go with it. You can have flexibility in your schedule which is great, but at the same time, your work doesn't really leave you. You're always on. The problem with us is where we're both never really off. There has to be considerable effort for us to find time for leisure activity, for even just together time. You know a lot of our together time is spent in the same room with one another but working on separate things.

Stephanie: Yeah, I know that experience intimately.

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

that one another understands that this is also important. You know, we're having a foursome with our careers.

James, early 30s, partner

So you have to be okay with that too, right? It's interesting because I think some people would give the advice that it's better to be with another PhD student so they understand how you feel, but I don't necessarily agree. I think that's certainly one way to go about it, but as long as you're able to support one another and understand one another, then I don't think there should be any limits on who you date or who you end up marrying.

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

I think the earliest memory of us discussing children was when we first started dating. We weren't a couple that started in high school [laughs]. We had definite, formed identities by the time we met each other, so we weren't sure how each other felt about children. Family was very important to me so if James didn't want a family, then I would have had to either convince him or leave—right.

I think if pregnancy happens, it happens. I'm not on any birth control, but we're not actively trying to get pregnant. We're not actively waiting either. I'm in my 20s now and I have friends who are my age and are having fertility issues.

James, early 30s, partner

So I always said I would have kids by 30. It was a life goal. I think first you establish yourself in your career—I don't even know if that's happened for me yet. But you have these items on your list that you want to achieve by a certain age. And 30—I wasn't daunted by the age, but I was almost looking back. Did I feel like I accomplished a lot in my 20s? I have no issue with it whatsoever, but I thought I would have a family by that point.

Stephanie: So when children didn't happen by 30...

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

Stephanie: So infertility is a concern for you then?

Actually, I've been pregnant twice before. I ended both pregnancies. *The last time was with James just after I got accepted for my PhD and after I got that acceptance letter. It was the happiest time of my life and then when I got the news, I thought all of that had suddenly been taken away from me. So [pause] it was mostly my decision to end the pregnancy. At that time, I really felt like I was running away from this responsibility. I really felt like I was being selfish and I felt that I wasn't even allowing the opportunity for that to be explored. I just said, "no I can't sacrifice this right now. No, this is something I've worked too hard for". But now, I feel like it's a whole different ballgame. I feel like I'm in a different phase of my life. I feel like a baby wouldn't stop me from getting to where I need to be.*

James, early 30s, partner

We did what most couples do...we got a dog. It fills that void for now—just a little starter kid. It's a huge movement now; people are having dogs instead of kids. We still plan on having kids. I mean let's face it—if you're going to be doing a PhD, you're going to be talking to somebody that's in their 30s by the time that they're ready to have kids. Quite frankly, to have them before that means not necessarily having that strong financial foundation that you'd likely want to have.

I think personally, although it's challenging, it's a great time to have kids when you're doing graduate studies. As long as Sophia's passes her comps, I mean writing a dissertation can be fairly flexible depending on the research that she's doing. That's not to say that it's a pushover—it's actually a very intense process. But at the same time you can be flexible with your timeline if you need time off to write. I'm, however, not the one that has to carry the child and I'm not the one that has to do it while being enrolled in a PhD program.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

James' mother and my mother *play a role—reminding me of my fertility and all that good stuff. We have to be married first before any of that can take place though. We're Catholic, so let's say things have to take place before a baby is 'legitimately welcomed' into our family. No bastards. I think my mom has moved beyond that now though—she's like "I don't care if you get married anymore, let's just have a baby" She's a little bit older and she wants to see her grandchildren.*

So I fell and hurt my back last week and my mom was like, "oh my gosh—you won't even have children now. Be careful with your body". She's THAT type of mom. So definitely parents play a role. Sometimes I talk to my mom about school and I tell her I have this great professor and blah, blah, blah. She'll ask "oh, are they married? Do they have kids?" I'll say "no mom, they don't want to have kids". She'll say "oh, that's a shame, because why wouldn't they want to have some of those excellent experiences that they could get with their child?"

James, early 30s, partner

I think the only one that has the pressure is Sophia. I feel like women in general would get the majority of the pressure from family regardless. It's probably because they're the ones that have to bear the child. Every time Sophia's mother sees her she'll bring it up in one way or another. "When am I going to get grandkids?" It's almost really a kind of teasing. I don't necessarily know if that's her Asian culture or if that's just a mother being a mother and wanting grandchildren. But that question is often followed by "when are you going to get married?"

Sophia's mother is also afraid she will die before grandkids. She wants to know her grandkids, which I can understand and that's what leads to pressure. At the same time, that became a big part of the decision—does Sophia do a PhD or not? Her mother was like—"oh you're doing your PhD, really?" I ended up actually talking to her about it and eventually she kind of backed off. I basically said "the PhD is going to happen. This is why and you need to get behind it".

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

James, early 30s, partner

Stephanie: How do you think you might manage parenthood and an academic trainee role?

We're kind of experiencing it through our dog. With the dog you start to see—you're developing these coping skills and different tools that we've used to overcome certain difficulties that we face on a day-to-day basis. We can get better over time and some days we have relapses...just like everybody else. But we get back on our horse and we're learning those tools that we're going to need to use when it comes time for children. We definitely fall into different roles and we're really good at those particular roles. We definitely depend on one another to fill the things that we're not so good at.

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

James, early 30s, partner

I think it's a matter of showing what you believe in and really embracing all of your values all the way around, in terms of work and family. I think you need to be real about how difficult it's going to be, but at the same time I think it pays off to be optimistic. It pays off to be hard-working. There are people that do it. There are people who manage.

Even though everything would be financially stretched to the limit with a child, I look around and think there's nothing we don't have that we need, right? So, we'd make it work. We would have food on our table. We'd be able to buy things. I think you just make it work with children.

Sophia, late 20s, second year doctoral student, social science-related discipline

I think I would stay home for at least six months. I think James would be open to sharing a leave with me. I've worked from home so much that I feel like I would like to fill my day, or fill the rest of my time other things...getting back into it and not stray too far behind the pack. I've heard from other female academics that have gone maternity leave that their intention was to publish an article. I don't know how achievable that is. As the grad student, it would make sense for me to stay home, for me to get mat leave benefits from the university. I make the baby's food, so I'm staying home for at least a portion of that leave.

James, early 30s, partner

I think that's what our parents did and their parents before them did. The circumstances were different. The challenges were different, but there's always going to be challenges. For the majority of the world there's always going to be those moments where you go through things where you do have to sacrifice, but it is for the greater good and it is for your kid too.

Appendix P: Comprehensive Narratives for Emma and Edward

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

I'm sort of the bottom of the faculty pecking order because as a postdoc, I am faculty but I'm not full faculty. I do sometimes feel a bit of a social pressure from the full faculty to be there as long as they are—it's never explicit and, to be honest, I'm not even sure if it's real. Sometimes I wonder if this type of thinking is a gender ailment because I'm not sure if I was a man in this office if I'd feel that same. We do have a few men who work there and they're much less—like they certainly are there much less than I am even though they're in the same position. I just don't get that sense from them there's that much of a pressure.

I have always been the hardest worker. I finished my PhD within four years. I didn't get distracted, but I sometimes wish I had been a bit distracted. I really loved writing my dissertation. I know a lot of people really complain, but I loved it. I'm really enjoying going back and even working on it now for the manuscript for a publisher. A big part of that need to finish quickly was that my mom took ten years to do her dissertation and so I was always absolutely focused on not following that. But also she did have my brother in the middle of it—that's just going to affect things and she was teaching full time.

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

I've noticed that there's definitely a tendency amongst some male PhDs and postdocs and even newly-minted professors to try to graft some kind of masculine thing into their work. It's not really like a traditionally masculine thing—it's not like banging in fence posts all day or working with your hands. So I think there's definitely a little bit of “I'm a family man, but I'm also an intrepid researcher”. There's a little bit of chest-puffing and what not. For all the liberal pretenses, there's a whole lot of “daddy knows best” and “mom is at home”. I don't know if this is guys trying to be manly in an office environment, but there's certainly a little bit of the old “I'm the breadwinner—she stays at home” mentality. I think it might be substitution. These are not guys who 200 years ago would have been bushwhacking in Africa and hunting lions—these are guys who would not traditionally be viewed as masculine in a lot of ways.

Stephanie: You and Emma are certainly challenging that androcentric academic model. Do you think it makes a difference in your relationship, having a partner who is also an academic trainee?

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

Two years ago I was teaching a course at a local university. I had 80 students and no TA, so this course was taking a huge amount of my time. I was also working at things on the research side that actually really sped up. THEN the dishwasher broke...it's still actually broken.

Stephanie: Oh man, that stuff can end relationships.

That's sort of the thing. When the dishwasher broke, all of a sudden I also had to do dishes. It didn't become 'we have to do the dishes'. It became 'I have to do the dishes'. The fact I said I 'have to', should be enough of an indication to you about gender.

It's not like Edward says, "you have to do the dishes now", because I'm going to say "no". But if I don't point it out it doesn't get done. I don't want to be a nag. I'm not going to follow him around. I know too many women who do that—no interest in that. But he doesn't see that things have to get done. He'll say "I'm sorry, I'm really busy". I'm busy too, but if the time comes out of my time...it doesn't occur to him that time management is not just about his time management for his goals—it's time management as a unit.

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

They do understand the rhythm of the work, various pressures and what not. I mean I don't think somebody has to have a PhD to understand, but it certainly increases the likelihood that they will. I've seen couples that I know where one is doing a doctoral degree and the other one is long out of school. It can create tensions, but that also depends on the individual attitudes and characters of the people involved. People with PhDs—they've both got golden God damn brains [said sarcastically], so you get into some ridiculous debates. Everybody does have an ego and it is a pursuit where you are encouraged to sell your work and promote yourself, so there's certainly a little bit of that 'smartest person in the room' attitude. From time to time, Emma and I try to work on that, keep it at a minimum.

We've actually had periods in the last few years where we barely see each other for three months. I mean when I was finishing up exams and PhD coursework in another city, Emma got her postdoc job here. So she was commuting between there and here and for a while we were back here together. You just end up not having a lot of time together. When we get to see each other, it's a lot nicer. It's like dating in your home, right? But my work kind of goes in cycles. I'll get very tired, very burnt out, very cranky and I need to take a week kind of easy. When I do that, I'm probably kind of a shitty person to live with, when I get burnt out like that.

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

Edward really wants kids. He also really wanted to get married first. I didn't want to get married. Don't get me wrong, I wanted to marry Edward, I just wasn't in a rush to get married. With the idea of starting a family, I oscillate significantly between being sort of so frustrated that I can't have the children that it makes me almost sad, to not really being sure that this is even something that I want.

Stephanie: And when you say 'can't have'?

Because of the situation, because I don't have time basically. It's been especially frustrating given the fact I have a few colleagues who are men whose wives have had children and they suffer financially if she takes a leave. So there is that feeling of sort of a) I really like what I do and I don't want to miss an opportunity but b) there's also those pressures to sort of make sure that things are financially stable before we go into that.

I'm not getting any younger, so it's no longer that kind of, "well, some day when we think we're sorted out" thing. It's realizing that things are never going to get sorted out...that there's no such thing as that sort of perfect time. Edward just wants that time to be sooner than later.

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

We're setting these conditions where we need to make sure we figure out what our employment situation will be in the next number of years. We want to get that sort of nailed down. We're at this point where I would like to have kids. Emma knows that. I would say that sometimes she really wants kids and other times—it terrifies her

I would rather get a pregnancy done sooner than later. Your body deteriorates as you get older and I've got kind of a dicey back and hip. I don't want to be 60 and having a two-year-old kid running around. No, terrifies me. The fact that I'm 30 kind of shocks me a little bit. Thirty, and I'm still in this fucking situation...still in school. Anyways, when I die, I'm gone. So what I leave is my kids, and hopefully I have given them a chance to have a decent life. That's important to me. I want to make sure that they can stand on their own two feet, make sure they learn, make sure they know how to make a hard decision rather than an easy decision.

Maybe one thing that gives me a bit of trepidation about having kids, if I do have trepidations, is that they have to come first. I can't say "I feel like going somewhere" and just leave them with my parents on a whim. I don't think it's my responsibility necessarily to make sure they have everything they want, but it is my responsibility to make sure they have everything they need. So if we have kids, that's serious. They comes

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

Stephanie: Do you have any of your own personal desires for parenthood, separate from Edward's?

I worry if we have kids, even if Edward says "I'll do most of the work", I will just swoop in there and say "well I have to because it's my responsibility because I'm the mom". But I do want to have kids. I want to, for biological reasons and I have some kick-ass names picked...and the idea of shaping a person is also pretty exciting.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

I have certainly felt societal pressure to have children. Especially when I'm outside of academia, engaging with my aunts or my aunts through marriage. My mother puts no pressure on me whatsoever. She has sacrificed her academic career for children and also for her teaching. I watched her and if she wasn't teaching or prepping for teaching, she would be driving my brother to basketball. Like she says, "never get married, never have kids". The fact that it rolls off my tongue should give you some idea. Now, my mother-in-law, she just loves babies. She loves being around babies. She doesn't—

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

first. I mean the thing that stands out for me as the most important thing in this decision is job security. I have this mild anxiety about it. If we have children I want to make sure that we've got enough financial stability. I'll admit that growing up, my family didn't always have a lot of money. I maybe have a little bit of anxiety about that.

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

I don't recall there being much pressure from family to have children. My dad, he'd like to be a grandfather. He'd get a kick out of that. I think family is very important to me, but I can't say I feel any social pressure or anything like that.

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

pressure would be the wrong word. I would call it support. Both my in-laws would love to have children around.

Some pressure I get from some of my girlfriends—they've more entered to that phase now. Right now I feel like I can't swing a cat without hitting someone who's pregnant, which is having effect. So there's definitely a social pressure with girlfriends because the expectation is most of them have transferred to all the same life milestones around the same time. There seems to be this desire that everyone around them will at least have the same set of priorities. There's this kind of competition where you have to be the busiest. You have to be the most successful. You have to be the closest to that 1950s ideal, and if you aren't, it's because you're selfish.

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Emma, age 29, first year postdoctoral trainee, social science discipline

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

Edward, age 30, fourth year doctoral student, social science discipline

Stephanie: How do you think you might manage parenthood and an academic trainee role?

One possibility is that I would work full-time in the academy and Edward would work part-time and then take care of the kids (or be a stay-at-home dad). Edward's dream, actually, is to move back in with his parents. My mother-in-law has basically said "if you have children, I will babysit all the time. I will literally move in". I think I can really see my mother-in-law as being more the primary care deliverer during the day.

Everything in the last ten years have taught me, both in academia and outside of academia, that sometimes life throws you these unbelievable curve balls and [pause] someone needs to prepare for what comes next. I think if you have a supportive partner, I think even in academia it can make a big difference. The vast majority of people I know who have been really, really successful do not have big family lives. If they do, either they're very, very well off so it's not really an issue, or the other partner has sort of stepped up to the plate. Historically men were able to have a family and a career because someone stayed home.

With most couples, I think, you've got one individual who is very career-oriented. The other one does step up—it doesn't mean they don't work, but you can't have both of them going, you know, 60 or 70 hours a week and then have kids. I mean it just doesn't work. I know some families where the woman is the careerist and the man is a little more laid back and vice versa. I mean the idea that men can have family lives and careers is kind old shit. If you work all the time, if you're on the road 30 weeks a year, if you don't see your kids, you don't have a family. It's just like we like pretend that all a man has to do is impregnate the wife and then pay the mortgage or something to be considered a father.

I have generally been comfortable with the idea of prioritizing Emma's career over mine. I figure she's probably got better earning potential than I do, so that's sensible as long as I do something. If I have to cut down on my work and stay at home with the kid, that's not going to shatter my life [laughs]. I mean my child is my priority...I want to take care of them. That's part of the point of having a family for me.

Kids do things and shit happens, pardon my language, so being able to roll with the punches, that's essential. You worry about the things that are worth worrying about and not about the things you can't control. With kids, there are always going to be unanticipated things that will happen. If you're the sort of person that is comfortable with unexpected events, that's probably a better situation than best-laid plans.

Appendix Q: Comprehensive Narratives for Larissa and Jason

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

When I started, *I thought I wanted to go into the academy and be a professor, which is why I started a PhD. But I hate it. I can't wait to leave.*

Stephanie: So what is it about the academy that did not sit well with you?

[Laughs]. The fact that you even say 'the academy' is exactly what I'm talking about. It's the tenured profs that have been running things for many years; there are politics. The other thing is that you can be a good researcher, but what percentage of papers that are published in the academy are ever read? What percentage are implemented? I just think most academic work is probably never read, which means so many grad students are stressed to the max working, trying to publish papers and all they are doing is piling up in the library not doing anything useful.

Larissa, age 32, partner

Knowing that Jason wanted to do a PhD and pursue his education, I was like "go for it". I was a little scared of course, at first, because I didn't have any family or friends here. It was all new people. I struggled when we first got here, but I love it now.

As a trainee spouse, it can be lonely. I think it's different for Jason as a student, because he's got his classmates...he has that interaction. I didn't even have a job at first, so it was a bit harder. So I joined a book club. It was nice to get out there and socialize and meet people [laughs]. I'm just very shy, so it was not something I felt comfortable doing. I also joined the international spouses organization and I met a girl from the States as well. We've been friends ever since then. Jason actually found that organization for me when we first got here. There are a lot of women in that group, so that's a good thing too. Plus I like to go out and just go shopping, so you meet people there too.

The first couple of years here it was mainly him working a lot. So even that first year he was trying to do a normal schedule, like 9 to 5, so that we could have dinner together. But it was a lot of nights that he would stay up until 2am or 3am, worked 12-14 hour

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

Larissa, age 32, partner

days. There were times that I would go to his lab just to see him and to get myself out there too. I think he worked Monday to Friday hard just so he had weekends with me and we tried to go do things locally.

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

Larissa, age 32, partner

Larissa, she is older than me, so she's been wanting to have kids for a long time. It was kind of implied after we got married that we would pull the goalie [i.e. cease using birth control]. I also want kids, but I wanted to wait until we had enough money and enough stability that we could do it without worrying.

Even when we were first dating, we had talked about kids and family and values and all that stuff. It was something that we were open about, not something that we were going to bring up last minute, like "do you want kids or not?" We both wanted kids, but it was a matter of the timing.

Specifically, there are two reasons why I have wanted to wait to have kids. The first reason is that my parents had me very young and it caused a lot of problems. They made a lot of mistakes and my life growing up was not as good as it would have been if they had waited and had stable employment situations. I wanted to make sure I didn't follow in that footsteps. And second, if we had had kids three or four years ago, we would have been in a much worse financial position than now because I was in school. Back then,

We decided that while he was finishing up his bachelor's, I'd continue working and we'd save up some money and after that we'd decide where to go. So after that he decided to do his PhD and I asked "when should we have kids". He said "before 35". I'm okay with between 30 and 35, but I've done a lot of research and they say, the longer you wait, the greater the chances of Down Syndrome and all that stuff. I wanted a healthy baby and I wanted to start younger, so I said "can we do it in your first couple years in your PhD?"

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

Larissa found it difficult to get a job. So we had two people living off a grad student salary, which was very tough.

Now, I'd say all our ducks are in order. This is the first time that that's happened. We aren't struggling financially, or wondering where we are going to move for grad school. This is the first time where we have a very clear path about what's about to happen. We have the money to do it. We know where we are moving next year, but we know I'm graduating. We have no uncertainty about our life. Plus, if we have children here, they can become dual citizens. This is impossible in the States, to go the other way. But if you have a child in Canada, Canada will not make you renounce. I mean dual citizenship is a good thing to have.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

Two weeks after our wedding, my grandmother was asking about children. My dad is like "wait as long as you can...finish school first". He is pushing in the opposite direction because he thinks school is very important. He is very proud...he's like "my kid is going to be a doctor". He loves talking about it.

Larissa, age 32, partner

I wanted to do it sooner. I don't want to be 50 and having a kid...I want to be able to keep up with them.

We also didn't want to struggle with money. It was a matter of being stable, so we decided that fourth year was the best year to try to start having kids. So we are actively trying now.

Larissa, age 32, partner

All of my coworkers are pregnant. They are younger, like 25, so Jason and I are a bit on the older side. Seeing them in the office, I'm like "ah, I want that". It's a bit of an influence. Some of them just got married too, so they maybe felt ready and they didn't have a PhD husband or anything like that. So it's different circumstances.

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

I think with Larissa's family, there is implicit pressure that they don't discuss much at all. If I had to guess, I would say they want grandkids. She was born and raised in the US, but her parents were born in India. To them, being a wife and a mother, that's Larissa's job as a woman. It is highly viewed and Larissa was raised by these very traditional Eastern views. Despite being more Americanized, she still gets a lot of that cultural influence from her parents.

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Jason, age 27, fourth year doctoral student, STEM discipline

If Larissa got pregnant today, I would want to spend some time with the child, but I would be okay with her going home to her family while I am finishing up writing my thesis. I would imagine she would go home for some of that support. It's only an eight hour car ride, or a two hour flight for me to get to them. I would have to look up what stage babies start recognizing faces though. I wouldn't want to miss that stage, but I wouldn't take any time off unless something unforeseen happened.

Larissa, age 32, partner

Larissa, age 32, partner

So after Jason's done school, we'll go wherever he gets a job. So that's the goal for at least the first few years. We want to have a parent in the house with them, and most likely I want to be that parent. I just want to be there for them for the first few years of their life. I just want to have that bonding with them.

Appendix R: Comprehensive Narratives for Ella and Curtis

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

In my master's program, I would very commonly go to campus at 7 a.m. and be there in class or in the library until 11 p.m. So it was pretty grinding. At least for your core classes, you had the same people in every class, so for each semester you had a group of five people for every class. So those were the four other people that I was with from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Having that network was nice and then they had girlfriends, so Ella also had somebody that was going through the same thing. She doesn't really have that support here yet.

The PhD kind of surprised everyone, but Ella was always totally kind with it and equally solid. We're Mormons, so it is a culture that highly prizes education and particularly believes that there is this duty to better yourself and be educated. I know we both come from a background where it's just expected that you'll get as much education as you can. Education is definitely a really big thing within Mormonism in Utah which is the hub of that—it is actually the most overeducated state in the United States.

Ella, age 24, partner

It's funny because originally when we got married, Curtis wasn't sure about going into academics or just going out in the workforce. He came to a crossroads and he was like, "oh I don't know what I should do. What should I do?" And I was like "go for the PhD!!" I really wanted to have an environment where our kids saw that learning is important and—enjoyable. I mean not every minute is enjoyable, but once you've gotten somewhere and accomplished something with what you've understood and learned, you know it can just be gratifying and just make life beautiful and enriching.

Stephanie: Do you find that you and Curtis are able to spend time together now?

Not necessarily, because I'm working and we're both introverts. I don't know if that makes a difference in anything, because we can hang out for a little while and he's like, "okay I've got to stay away from you for a while. I've got to have my own space". So that's just the way it goes. This semester has been interesting because Curtis is a night owl and I generally go to bed earlier. Curtis will stay up really late working on homework or whatever [laughs]. He gets to be in his little man cave and it works out for

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

During my master's, *the professors were giving us advice on doctoral programs like "hey, just so you know, there are these schools that are really great for family life...others are bad for family. The choice is entirely up to you if you want to avoid them". Family was really important in my master's university because it is a church university. I don't know if professors would be fired per se, but it would not bode well for a professor to not have their family life in order. The institution wants you to do really well at the research, but they expect your family life to also be a priority. A lot of universities would say "great, if that's what you want—be productive in your research, but you may have these family problems. That's not our issue". My master's university would take issue with that, so definitely a different culture.*

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

Coming from that Mormon culture, you cannot say anything that is anti-child. Unless someone says otherwise, it's assumed that children are on the table. I never really had a question about whether I wanted kids. It was kind of the de facto choice and whether that's religion or upbringing or anything else, I don't know.

Ella, age 24, partner

him. I don't really see him much because I'm just like, "okay, better leave him alone...don't be distracting him" because I know what it was like being a student. So I work on my hobbies. I like to read a lot and I'm trying to stay fit even though it's winter time and that's kind of a pain [laughs].

Stephanie: Do you find that you ever get lonely?

It's a bit easier that I work part-time during the day or else I'd go crazy. Sometimes it's like, "hey, I haven't seen you for a while. You want to come and hang out with me?" Curtis will often say "I have homework to do".

Ella, age 24, partner

I have always known that I wanted to be a mom. I guess we're just waiting for that timing, you know, after we got married and everything. I had gone through periods of time where I was like, "oh I want to be a mom...a teacher...a mom...an architect...a mom". It was always "I want to be a mom". So that was my motivation. I didn't know necessarily when and how things were going to work out, but I knew I wanted to be a mom.

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

When we were still at my master's university, Ella already wanted to start having kids. Probably the main reason we forbore is that we didn't want to have a lapse in coverage for health insurance—obviously Canada is very different in that regard [laughs]. When we first got here, there was that period where we weren't sure about our coverage and so that was definitely the biggest thing. Someone was also explaining to us that if you have a job in Canada for six months, you get mat leave (which is not a really a thing in the States). So that was foreign to us. I thought we should try to time things so as to take advantage of that.

Money was implicitly a concern, although we never really said, “oh we can't afford to have kids so let's not” for that reason. I mean the religious culture that we come from typically assumes that the guy should be supporting the family and the wife. Motherhood is a very big thing within that culture. So for me, I'm on the ‘right’ path because this is what fulfillment in life looks like for me. I'm doing what I should as a man, whereas Ella right now is kind of in that limbo phase where motherhood is waiting. I wouldn't want to do that to her and just tell her “well, wait five more years—put your life off”. For her, that is part of her goal in life—to be a mother. I want to support her in that. Starting a family...that's why you get married.

Ella, age 24, partner

I got married when I was 19. I know at that point I was a little bit too young and I was like, “oh, we'll wait a couple of years at least to have kids”. I was a student. I got my bachelor's and during that time it's just like “I don't think I can really handle kids at the same time, so let's just wait”. Now, I don't really want to wait. I know my biological clock is going off. I also feel like when you have kids, you continue to increase and grow and I think that's something that I want to experience. I really want to grow as a person. I don't want to be stationary. I just want to be someone different. I hope to be someone better than I am now.

Curtis was like, “well, I think you should wait a little while to get pregnant because you don't have any friends and you'll want some support right?” And I was like, “okay, fine. I can wait longer [laughs]. Fine, it'll be so hard”. He was right about that. I did need to have friends here and support and build that up. When I got here I was literally watching my neighbours to make sure, if somebody was coming outside, I'd be like, “hey, how it's going? I need a friend”. I know this sounds so silly.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

Families are important in the Mormon faith. We—families can be together forever and bringing people into the world is always a good thing, especially when you can raise them in a good environment. So when you have a culture that's so family-oriented, even people who aren't trying to put pressure on may ask “hey now, kids?” They may not try to apply pressure, but probably some people would feel it as pressure.

Ella, age 24, partner

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

I don't think a man would get those questions quite as much. I think maybe Ella feels like she's being pressured. I don't.

Ella, age 24, partner

My brother-in-law who is older and has his two young kids, he was pushing this idea about kids all the time, asking “do you want to have kids? I'm ready to be an uncle again”. Curtis was like, “when we feel like it” [laughs]. I feel like it's like none of his business [laughs].

Stephanie: Do you feel any pressure, one way or the other, from your department?

My current graduate coordinator did her PhD here and had her first child while she was doing her PhD. My supervisor is also pregnant now, so I definitely can't see getting advice from them to not to have children. I probably wouldn't be here at the university if that was the case. I investigated before I decided to enrol and explicitly asked the students if any of the guys had families.

My mom's on her third marriage and her husband is a member of the church too. He's like, “oh we really want kids”. I'm like “shut up. I don't care about your wants”. I know that sounds really crass, but I just get really frustrated and especially within our faith, people can be really pushy about kids. Asking “oh, so how long have you been married? How come you don't have kids?” I'm like “because it's between me and the

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

I don't think a man would get those questions quite as much. I think maybe Ella feels like she's being pressured. I don't.

Stephanie: Do you feel any pressure, one way or the other, from your department?

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Future Trainee Lifestyle

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

Once I'm done my coursework this semester, I can do all the work I want from home—take a semester off anytime I want, I guess. It just wouldn't be advisable. So once my coursework is over, staying home would definitely be a lot easier. Ella could go out and do something that she's not able to do if I were at home.

Ella, age 24, partner

Lord and my husband and not between you and me, so leave me alone” [laughs]. I almost want to have kids but not have to tell my family [laughs].

In terms of being married and having kids right away, I think we're late on that. Me at twenty-four [laughs] ... just a little. We are behind in that we've been married longer without having kids, whereas I think a lot of Latter Day Saints generally get married and have kids within a couple of years. I haven't had any questions from the church, mostly because I've talked about “oh yeah, we're just not having kids right now and it's cool”.

Ella, age 24, partner

I'll probably have to go back to work part-time and just kind of juggle, work part-time around Curtis' schedule. Curtis would be the breadwinner, the basis of income, but if I needed to work, I could do that too. I really like the idea of Curtis being there for our kids, and just helping them learn and helping them enjoy learning. I feel like as a good

Curtis, age 28, first year doctoral student, social science discipline

The people in my program who have kids—and this isn't really motivation of mine, but it's true—they're much more proactive with their time than the singles because they have to be. For singles, like if we have a research paper due, 80 percent of that time is write it and 15 percent is Facebook. Whereas marrieds, well, they have kids and it's like, “well I have to drop them off at school. I have to do this and that”. It's like “okay, well I have from 3 to 5 p.m. to work on the paper” and 3 to 5 p.m. is spent working on the paper (laughs).

Ella, age 24, partner

father, you would read to your kids or as a good mother, you'd help them learn and everything. Just being there for them.

I'm not entirely sure how things work with the schooling, but I'm sure Curtis could actually work it out with his professors and say, “okay my wife's due at this time. Can I go ahead and work on some of the homework beforehand?” Curtis really likes that he can be so flexible with hours and be there for our family. I kind of like that too, that with an academic career you can do that. We'll also have help from friends and family. I've told my mother “when I'm having a baby, I want you to come up here”.

Appendix S: Comprehensive Narratives for Penelope and Louis

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

One of the main reasons why we were attracted to each other was because we both valued education and knowledge and were both going to university. We wouldn't have met each other if we weren't going to university and being exposed to the same kinds of people and the same kind of situations. Sometimes we don't know if education is important or if we're just delaying getting a job [both laugh]. How we grew up, the both of us, the way that education was placed as an identifier of who we were and then how we made each other be better at that, that's important.

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

Research...learning...It's also what I love. I think that most of us do PhD studies because we love to read and we love to learn. You don't spend four years studying something because you think it's horrible. When I try and think about what I could do to relax—I have a really hard time figuring out what that would be because my work is what I enjoy.

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

I really have a lot of respect for anyone who is undertaking PhD studies. I think my mother always kind of assumed [laughs] that I would go on and do a PhD because she did her PhD. I've always really liked those kinds of intellectual pursuits and talking about intellectual things, but sometimes deciding not to do a PhD has started to make me have a little bit of an inferiority complex. It's not like it's really bothering me—it's just that sometimes when Penelope and I are talking about things, I have started to feel like I'm not keeping up as much as I was before.

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

Like this weekend, for example, Louis and I planned to do an apocalypse-themed movie weekend. To anybody else that sounds like us hanging out watching apocalypse movies, but to me that whole time I'm going to have to be on about the themes of peak oil or societal collapse or whatever that relates to my work that goes on in those movies. I end up strategically picking things that we do together that sort of feed into my work/life. You're genuinely interested in what you study, that's what it is. If I have four hours to myself, I will read a book on my research topic area that's sitting in my pile. I do find it very difficult to separate the two—research and life.

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

I really think that a PhD is a perfect time to have a child. I'm flexible. I don't have to go to school if I don't want to most of the time. If something comes up I can call and say, "sorry, something came up". If I have to bring the baby with me, I can bring the baby with me.

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

Stephanie: Would you say that her studies have changed your relationship at all?

We were pretty co-dependent before [laughs]. We spent basically all our time together. After we met in undergrad, there was quite a big chunk of time when we basically didn't really have extensive social lives outside of ourselves. That kind of bugged me from time to time, but she didn't seem to have any problems with it. Recently she has been making a lot of friends in her PhD program and she seems very happy about that so I think that's pretty good. But, [sighs] I think we definitely spend much less time going out and doing things, just because we both have a lot of work to do. So we've basically started to just watch TV when we're together at home in the evenings. That's a change.

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

I've always kind of thought it would be nice to have a kid. Then I started to read more and sort of think about what is ethical to do and those kinds of things and I started to think, maybe having a kid wasn't the best thing...the most responsible thing to do. I kind of compromised by saying to myself, "well, I'll adopt a kid". That way it's the ethical thing to do and I'll be able to raise a child. But then I found out how expensive that it is and that kind of [smiles] threw a wrench into the whole thing.

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

Louis wanted to wait until he had a job, a full-time, permanent whatever. I said, "sweetie, you're going to be a high school teacher. You may not have a job for five years and we're not going to wait that long. I don't want to have my first kid when I'm well into my 30s". I'm not really interested in that. I want to do it right now.

Stephanie: So age factored in?

[Pause] age factored in only because I didn't want to be a lot older than my child and be really out of touch. That's really what I thought about when I thought about my age. I guess there is always additional concerns about your body changing and getting older and now that I'm in my second part of my 20s, I've started to realize that I'm that much closer to 30 and what that means for how much time I have left.

Stephanie: So is this desire for a child a fairly new one in your life?

Well it's interesting because until about three years ago, I had planned to live my life child-free. Louis and I had agreed upon that...that we were both more interested in travel. We were also concerned about the future; being an environmentalist, you really

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

So I think when Penelope and I first met, she was also very independent. She didn't want to be tied down and didn't want a child, but then her views slowly changed to wanting a child. I think that also coincided with us getting more serious in our relationship.

I think the whole baby concept really got solidified sometime after we got married when we started to plan our immediate future together. That's when Penelope really started to push, but I've always felt like I could go either way. Simultaneously I think that it would both nice to have the freedom and to not have the financial burden of a child but, I also think it would be great to have another focus around which we could plan our lives together.

Stephanie: So is/was marriage an important factor?

Not for me, but I think for her. I have never really put a lot of great significance in things like marriage, but I understand that a lot of people do and she does...especially her family. Her dad is a United Church minister, so she's kind of grown up thinking that marriage is very important. I think a part of it is that once you get married, it seems like the natural next step would be to have a kid.

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

feel like the world is on your shoulders. So we were concerned about bringing a child into the future.

My desire not to have children also corresponded with us not having good communication skills and not having a really supportive relationship with each other. So once we worked through some of that and created this very loving and supportive relationship, it switched. I started to feel like this was the person I wanted to be healthy for and who I wanted to be with for my whole life and who I wanted to have a child with. It really switched my priorities once WE got to a different place.

If we get pregnant in September/October, I'll have the baby in May or June, which means all I'm doing during that time of pregnancy is my thesis proposal. So I've thought a lot about what that means in terms of being busy. It means I won't be at school. I don't need to be at school. It means if I have a day where I'm feeling really sick, I can be really sick. And then it means that after I have the baby, I'll be doing my research. That's going to be a really community-oriented project—going to visit people, things that will actually probably be pretty positive for a baby in the world. I want them to get a little dirty and be exposed to germs and other faces and to get used to all of that world—I don't want to

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

I think another one of the reasons why I would want my own kid is that I wouldn't make the same kind of mistakes that my parents made with me [smiles]. I'm sure that's one of the primary [smiles] reasons why a lot of people have kids...because they think they can do better. So Penelope and I, we've talked a lot and we've analysed all these kind of different things that our parents didn't do or did do and how we could avoid those same problems, make improvements, or be better parents.

I've also got to say [sighs], I've been worried about our financial situation. Especially with her being a PhD student (which may or may not produce a career prospect at the end), and me having just spent a chunk of money going through teacher's college. So finances worry me and Penelope and I have talked about this. Her opinion is that we're always going to have money problems and we're never going to be 100 percent ready, So we should just go for it and believe that things will have a way of working themselves out. I'm not quite as optimistic about that [laughs], but a big thing for me is how strongly she felt like we should start trying now.

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

have a sheltered child. I find that my research is definitely shaping how I want my child to experience the world.

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

It was really encouraging for me to see this one girl in my program—she had a baby the first week we started our PhDs. She was pregnant on our orientation day and then the very first day of class (four days later), she walked in with a baby strapped to her chest. And I was like, “go home, go home” [laughs]. “Here, I’ll take notes for you, go home” [laughs]. But she was very much just like, “I’m okay” and she was and she is.

I think it's because she wanted to be there. It wasn't her first kid either, which I think helps. She wanted to learn and she really wanted people to know who she was and to build that community. She says that sometimes it's hard to leave the baby at home, but that having social connections at school is often just as important. Her husband is home to take care of the kid so she can just go out and make those connections that she needs as an adult. My supervisor also has a kid and he's like “if you ever need some help, talk to me about it”. So we've talked about what it means to have kids and why to have kids and why not to have kids and so he's been really helpful for that.

Stephanie: Do you feel like social expectations may be influencing your choice?

Louis, age 27, partner, master’s graduate, social science discipline

External pressures...NOOOOO, not from my parents or my family. Actually my mother is exerting pressure in the opposite direction. She thinks that we should be financially secure before trying to have a baby.

I think there is some pressure on Penelope’s end, for sure. Her mother really wants a grandchild. Her sister is also very traditional in those kinds of things, so she also really wants a baby and may be pressuring Penelope. Penelope grew up in a small town in Ontario so a lot of her childhood friends are already married with kids, sometimes multiple kids, so that might also create pressure. By comparison, none of our mutual close friends right now have a kid or are planning to have a kid. So I am not feeling pressure from my friends.

Stephanie: Does culture play a role in your decision-making at all, having spent some of your formative years in China and being raised by a Chinese mother?

I can say I'm pretty detached from that aspect of my personal history. I'm sure there are some lingering effects that are not really obvious down there in my subconscious, but a lot of the cultural baggage that I had from China I've kind of shed over the period of

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

Louis and I *always just think about what's best for us*. For example, *I think the world is probably a better place because I don't drive [laughs], because I'm very much of the mindset that if someone is behind you honking, you do what you need to do to be comfortable. That's always been my philosophy with driving and it's always been my philosophy with life...regardless of who is honking their horn at me. I need to examine where I'm at and decide if it's a good thing and not be pushed along lines that people or society have for me.*

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

I have a hard time separating my life and my work. I always have, because all I've ever been is a student. So to me, my work is starting to impact at home. I'll come home and talk too much about what I do and it impacts Louis and my relaxation time together. So I think I'm actually running into the first time in my life where I'm going to have to start thinking about those priorities, especially when we start talking about having children involved in the future. There's going to be days when I'm going to have to put my kid above my work. I'm sure when that child is here that I'll feel differently about it but, right now, that's scary. It's scary to think about having to put something other than my work first. Will it diminish my success?

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

time that I've been in Canada. Actually, I'm not even sure if there is pressure to have kids in China right now. So, actually, maybe it might be the other way around [smiles]. Maybe there isn't really a desire for Chinese people to have kids and maybe that's rubbed off on me.

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

In the past couple of months, Penelope's views about certain things have changed. I think that's because of what she's doing in her program right now and the kind of people she's been talking to. I think it's not out of the question that she would change her mind about a lot of fundamental aspects of her worldview in the next couple of years. That may or may not have an impact on our decision to have a child. So I think we're probably going to have some more in depth conversations about this in the near future.

Penelope, age 27, first year doctoral-trainee, social science discipline

Stephanie: Are there people you can/are speaking to for advice?

The woman in my department with the baby brings her in all the time and it doesn't impact anybody. She's been really encouraging and I enjoy talking to her about what it's like. She tells me "when you have a baby, you get your shit done because when you have ten minutes to work—you're a power horse. You work through it because you know you might not have another ten minutes that day". She says she's never been so efficient. So she's been really encouraging, just in terms of seeing how well she's succeeding while having that baby strapped to her chest.

I talk about her work/life balance all the time and how she does it all. She's got great tips. She tells me "you can't always keep a baby on a schedule, but you can still stay on a schedule because your husband doesn't need to be on a schedule every day". So because she has a supportive husband, she's able to do what she needs to do. If she really needs to go to bed and sleep all night, well he's going to be the one that's tired the next day, so she doesn't have to be tired every day. I think Louis would be like that. So I think having that supportive partner is a big help.

Louis, age 27, partner, master's graduate, social science discipline

Appendix T: Comprehensive Narratives for Scarlett and Eli

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

I can honestly say that *I definitely would not have signed up for the PhD for another, how many more years, if I wasn't interested* in the research that I do. That being said, being a female doctoral candidate in my department can be challenging. I'm not the only girl, but *I am the first girl in my research group, ever. E-V-E-R! But it's because I'm in [a male dominated STEM specialty] and it's just not common* for women to join. Sometimes I actually find it kind of *funny that people think that my training is going to be a new experience because I'm a girl, but it's just the same experience* as any other doctoral student [laughs]. *I go to classes, read papers, meet with my lab group, TA, and stress out over my comps just like everyone else. I guess that only difference is that there have been some questions that I've definitely had, different family priorities than other people, perhaps because of the fact that I got married.*

Eli's been an *incredibly important* part of my trainee experience—a huge support really, particularly with our baby on the way. *He'll bring me dinners at the office if I need them and he knows that if something is coming up and we won't be seeing as much of each other that I'll be more stressed out. He's really supportive* about the whole process [smiles]. I really try to convey to him that he's a *priority. I try not to spend much longer*

Eli, age 27, partner

I love my wife, which is probably why I worry about her so much—particularly about how much grad work she commits herself to. *Her supervisor has deadlines and pushes a lot, but doesn't always leave her enough time* to get the work done and it stresses her out. Part of me wonders if it's because *she's the first female groomed in her professor's lab and she doesn't want to be the one that gives him a negative impression of women in [STEM] and pregnancy*. I'm concerned that her commitment might be *negatively impacting her personal time* and worry that all this work will cause her to *burn out, because she's totally the type that does*. I do what I can to be there for her, so if she has *to pull an all-nighter because a professor needs work tomorrow, I stay up with her and make sure there's coffee and snacks*. I'm just trying to *support her*.

I'd say, day-to-day, Scarlett's work *is probably not too different in terms of if she worked at a typical job. She does her allotted hours of work, comes home. She has a very distinct sense of when work is, when home is.*

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

than 9 to 5 at the actual office so I can at least get home at a reasonable hour and we can have some free time together. It is important to us that we have that time. I couldn't imagine doing life without him at this point. I know a lot of people go through school without a partner but I just feel like it could get very lonely.

Eli, age 27, partner

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Our baby was planned [Scarlett laughs, Eli smiles]. But deciding to get pregnant wasn't just a one day kind of thing. It was a discussion that had been going on between us for a long time. I think we just felt we were ready for a baby now. We discussed it and, you know, kind of aired out the idea. It's something we have always wanted, or wanted for a very, very long time, and it finally became, I guess, reasonable in our relationship. You get an education...you get married...you work on that marriage until you feel the timing is right and then, it's just the next progression.

Eli, age 27, partner

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

I'd also add that I've gotten most of my coursework out of the way which does make my time more flexible. I have defined my research at this point, so I guess just mentally there are less variables in that part of my life, so maybe I was ready to introduce some craziness in another part [smiles].

Eli, age 27, partner

Stephanie: As a couple, did you run into any difficulties getting pregnant?

That's a VERY personal question! I have no problems answering it, but I think I would rather leave that question for my wife to answer.

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

I'd also add that *I've gotten most of my coursework out of the way which does make my time more flexible. I have defined my research at this point, so I guess just mentally there are less variables in that part of my life, so maybe I was ready to introduce some craziness in another part [smiles].*

It was important to me to have my children before I turned 30, in part, because *my little brother has Down Syndrome and he was born when my mom was in her 30s. So I've kind of got a bit of a deadline on myself. It's not a hard deadline, it's just something in the back of my head that says like "if you're ready enough now..."*

To be honest, I was also a little worried about how long it might take to conceive, so I wanted to start earlier. *For me, it didn't happen right away and Eli and I both knew because we were paying attention to things. When I was under a lot of stress, I wasn't able to get pregnant. Like getting ready for my comps, for instance, was NOT a good time [laughs]. I've actually heard that some professors have taken leaves of absence from the university so that their bodies could relax enough to get pregnant.*

Eli, age 27, partner

Stephanie: Okay. Perhaps we can instead talk about your decision-making factors instead?

Our finances were an important consideration in my decision-making. You want to make sure you could look after and feed your family if, you know, it grows. I'm still fairly new at work, but I often think – "I need to keep this job. I need to move forward. I need to get a promotion so I can make more money so I can do more things". I think that's just natural. Your family is also kind of depending on you to bring in more—so they could have better things too.

I've done a lot of thinking about why I want a child, and I think it boils down to...*a personal longing. I want to see the world through somebody else's eyes. To me, the world has become a rather jaded and sometimes a horrifying place, and I really want to see the world as good and rejuvenated...like a re-genesis almost. But that sounds selfish in a way. A child is just something I believe will help fulfill my desire to nurture and look after somebody on top of, you know, my wife.*

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

So I have this *mentor for my academic career in my department*. When I was thinking about doing this PhD, I asked the specific question “*is it possible to have a family AND do a PhD?*” I was actually at the point where, if it wasn't possible, I wasn't interested in the PhD. It was really helpful to hear that my mentor *went through the exact same thing, and her and her husband decided to have their first while they were both in their PhD*. She's been a great source of information and support, and just wonderful for me. A different female faculty member also *got me in contact with some other PhD candidates who had children, so that's been great*. So, I know that *I'm not the first trainee to do it*.

A support group for women in STEM fields on campus has also been particularly useful for my decision-making process. *They had an informal session about becoming a parent while doing grad studies and they suggested that the best time is after you've done your comps, but before you start writing your thesis. That's apparently the time to do it and it's worked out well for us*.

Stephanie: What about family or friends? Did you talk to them about children?

Eli, age 27, partner

Society had no bearing on my decision to want to become a parent. I think our decision just boils down to the fact that *we talked and felt like now is the right time and age is only really that limiting factor on how many children we want to project having*.

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Eli, age 27, partner

I talked about children with my mom when I was making the decision about if I wanted to do a PhD, so she knew that Eli and I were interested in having a family at a younger age. I don't think there was any expectation or any pressure to have kids from her while I was still in grad school or before we were 30. [Laughs] but, I imagine if we'd waited until we were 30, some questions might have been vocalized, that's for sure.

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Eli, age 27, partner

Communicating with each other has always been important in our relationship and it's really going to be important once the baby arrives. We think it will help mitigate the stress from low sleep and how much more difficult it will be to go about the daily routine. We think communicating and being on the same page will really help conquer new obstacles. We can each kind of take care of ourselves, but the baby can't take care of itself [Scarlett chuckles]. We need to make sure that we are taking care of it properly and of each other too. Family is the priority for us.

Our families also aren't too far away, less than an hour, so there's going to be people around [laughing]. That was important to us too when we were making this decision to get pregnant. We aren't isolated. We have a strong network of our family and our church community. We have good friends that would kind of help us with a new baby, a new

coping mechanism because they'll be going through the same thing as us: new kid, similar life placement. So we will have some people who will be able to babysit or babysit-share with us. We also already have our name on the shortlist for the daycare at the university.

Scarlett, age 26, third-year doctoral trainee, STEM discipline

I've also been approved for a parental leave bursary for two terms through the university, so I will also be taking that time. I guess the primary focus will be on the baby, but I'm hoping to kind of keep up to date with what's going on in my research...we'll see. There was a supermom in my department who wrote three papers while she was on leave, so I would be interested in trying that but definitely, the baby and motherhood is going to come first [smiles].

I can see myself being a lot more defensive of my time at home and a lot of more strict about the whole 9 to 5 sort of thing after I come back from leave. I want to try not to bring work home with me and I'm absolutely not staying at the office longer. It helps that there are some young fathers in my lab and some of them have already drawn these lines and said, "no I can't have meetings on Wednesdays because my daughter has swimming lessons". I'm like, EXCELLENT!

Eli, age 27, partner

I want to be an involved dad... to build the bond with my child. So if we can afford it, I want to take a few months of parental leave to be at home. Feeding the baby, helping out with diapers...those are all the things I think I'm looking forward to because I think that's part of the experience of fatherhood.

Stephanie: Do you think you and the baby will be able to integrate into Scarlett's life at school?

For sure. Things like work barbeques, they are something that she's always invited me out to. Her professor brings his kids and some of the other people have young kids so they bring them and it's always inclusive—it's always inclusive of family.

Appendix U: Comprehensive Narratives for Zhara and Yaser

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Yaser, age 31, first year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

I'm not saying that I was always really focused when I was at work, but I think that because I was married, I really wanted to spend some time with my wife when I came home. I can say that in my culture, family is very important. I feel you should divide your time to be with your family. You need not to sacrifice one of them (family or work) for the other one. So this is the kind of culture that I grew up with and it affected this thinking.

Stephanie: What would you say the gender split is like among academic trainees in your discipline?

It's male-dominated. Yeah, a lot. I once heard a story about one supervisor and he wanted to hire a female student and then he told that student that she should promise that she would never be pregnant. I was shocked.

Stephanie: That was here at this institution?

Zhara, age 28, partner, master's graduate, STEM discipline

My old PhD supervisor expected, for example, that something gets finished before we leave for the day. So I actually worked into the night. It was really impossible to manage both life and studies. I didn't like it because I couldn't take enough time for my family. It was because of my supervisor's expectations. It was not because I couldn't manage a master's or PhD. In that situation, I couldn't do both of them together (work and family), so I decided to finish just my master's.

Stephanie: Did trainees in that lab have children?

There were some men, but not women.

Stephanie: Do you know if any of the men were primary caregivers?

I know that they weren't [laughs]. Actually, what I see now is that men don't pay attention generally to their family that much when they are grad students...they just pay

Yaser, age 31, first year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

No, at some other university, but I was shocked. I don't think that my current department would look differently if someone was pregnant, I mean in terms of commitment. I have a friend, he's a male and his baby was born last summer. He took his paternity leave and the department was totally okay. I don't think that they had any problem with that.

Zhara, age 28, partner, master's graduate, STEM discipline

attention to their studies. I think it's more important for women to pay attention to their husbands and children compared to men. I think it's their primary role.

With the supervisor that I'm working with now, it would be possible for me to do my PhD, but I decided I wanted to stay home with my child for some time. If studies were more important for me, I could continue my PhD with my new supervisor and that would be fine. I could work from home on some late nights, but I think it's not right. I think both for men and women, it's important to pay attention to their families. But maybe I can say that if men pay attention to 40 percent it's enough. If women pay attention to 60 percent it's enough. I think this thinking is because of maybe culture. In STEM, many students are from countries—their home countries are like my country or Eastern countries. So I think in those countries the culture and needs are more like this, but maybe in Canada, I'm not sure but I think they are a little different.

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Yaser, age 31, first year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Zhara, age 28, partner, master's graduate, STEM discipline

Stephanie: Did age factor into that decision-making at all?

To us, it was an important factor because we really thought that eventually we would have children. So we said “okay, there is no other excuse to postpone this and we're young enough and we have time to spend with our children now”. You never know, maybe in five years your life is totally changed and you're very busy, so maybe that time is not a good time and you're just wasting time not having children with no good reason.

When I started my PhD, I had a good excuse. Maybe it's not excuses anymore, but we could have had kids right? But I didn't know what the future would be. I didn't know what my supervisor would expect me to do in terms of time, pressure. Zhara, she was also a student and I think that those were good reasons not to have children. When Zhara finished her studies I knew that I would be finished in a few months, so then there was no other excuse.

Age is very important for us. I heard that maybe some diseases, they are expected if the age comes higher, like 30s. So I, we both prefer earlier—and also in terms of being calm when the baby cries, being able to play with baby, I think age is important because when you're older you can't tolerate things as well. Our plan was when we're ready, after that whatever happens, happens [laughs]. We both like children, but because of my studies at the time, we couldn't have them. After I decided to change to a master's, then we stopped taking precautions.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Yaser, age 31, first year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Our families were surprised [laughs]. We were talking to them on Skype so we could see their faces and we expected them to be happy, you know, shouting or congratulating us. At the time, both our families—her parents and my parents—they just said, “what?” [laughs]. Then for a few seconds there was just quiet and we tried to explain, “okay yeah, there is going to be a baby”. And they say, “oh yeah? Okay, okay, congratulations”. That was kind of surprising to us.

Zhara, age 28, partner, master’s graduate, STEM discipline

Generally in our culture, especially grandmothers and grandfathers, they want their child to have kids as soon as possible. But for my parents and Yaser’s parents, they didn’t push. Actually I think that my parents didn’t ask us because of my studies, but some parents they don’t care [laughs]. Actually, when I was born my mother was a graduate student and it was very difficult for her. When we told them that I was pregnant they were so surprised. But all were happy.

Stephanie: Was there any influence coming from your friends?

I see my friend and he has a very cute little girl and you imagine that someday you’ll have some baby like that. That’s very sweet. This friend is maybe one or two years older than me. So it’s more motivation...encouragement. At that time (it was a year and a half ago), he was a PhD student and then he had this baby and I saw that he had no problems. I mean even those small issues with financial things and maybe time management, he had no problem and he said that life became more beautiful.

My close friends, they don’t have kids. So most of them are master’s level and they’re studying. They think it’s better if they decide to have a child that they don’t go through a PhD. So they prefer just to wait to start the PhD until after they decide whether to have a child.

I mean in our culture back home in Iran, it’s more or less the same as here. When two young people get married, after a few years they decide to have a baby. Other factors determine exactly what time they decide, I mean, it’s financial, job or whatever.

Maybe there's something ridiculous that also had some small impact on our decision. We're permanent residents, we're not citizens. Now assume that we go back to Iran, decide to have a baby and then we decide to come to Canada again to work. So we might not have any problem to come here, but that baby is not a permanent resident and he or she has to apply for a visa and it's got to process. You have no idea how hard it is. So it's good for the baby to be born here. We know some people that want to go back to their country, but they may stay here for one year after graduation to have a baby here and then go.

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Yaser, age 31, first year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Sometimes you have to spend some specific time with your family, right. You cannot stay and spend the night in the university saying “oh I have a deadline, you stay alone” and your wife takes care of the baby [laughs]. I feel that would affect my work, as my work affects my family. I mean maybe I can work a few hours over the weekend, but if I have to spend two days of the weekend, I would say no. I wouldn't do that project.

The priority is family, then work, then education. Family... both children and mother and father. If education interferes with work or family, we will quit the education. It was like this for our parents in our culture.

Zhara, age 28, partner, master's graduate, STEM discipline

My plan is to stay at home for at least two years and then maybe for other children. I will be the primary caregiver and I just need some help. So that's fine if Yaser wants to be helping. I think we have our weekends, but the other days—Yaser won't be free. My mother will come too, for four months. I think it will be very difficult because we are alone here. In my home country when someone wants to study or work, grandparents do a lot.

Yaser, age 31, first year postdoctoral trainee, STEM discipline

Stephanie: Do you want to be an involved dad? Changing diapers, helping with feedings, those sorts of things?

Well, I think I have to [laughs]. I would escape if I could. The good thing here is that Zhara's mom is coming here to help her and that will be a good thing. I expect that I will not do anything during that period. But after that yeah, I will be involved.

After the baby comes, everything will change, right. But I think that father and mother, they're two complementing parts. So the mother will think about some factors. The father will think about some other factors, right? So if we were to move or go looking for some other apartment, I'll do that. I've heard that a dad should be like this and I think that this is true, so I'll do that.

Zhara, age 28, partner, master's graduate, STEM discipline

For now, I've decided that I am finished with my studies, maybe for three or four years. So I will take all my time for the children. If I want to start my PhD, for example, when my child is four or six years old, it's very different from, for example, one year. I think I can manage it when a child goes to school because I have a lot of free time for myself. Even if you are in school or working, I think that the first thing is that mothers should take care of children when they get sick.

Appendix V: Comprehensive Narratives for Maryann and Jake

Current Trainee Lifestyle

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

Maryann and I, we're very deliberate about trying to keep our schedules in sync as much as possible, to take advantage of evenings and weekends basically, to spend together. And so far we've managed to do that quite well. During Maryann's first trimester, I made a pretty conscious choice to stay at home as much as I could...just to be around, to be able to be supportive. She spent a lot of time feeling pretty unwell unfortunately. Being in bed with an upset stomach, that kind of stuff. So when that was happening I didn't want to be away.

I did my best to manage household chores, just in terms of keeping our kitchen going and cleaning and everything else. When one person doesn't have energy or isn't feeling well enough to even sit up in bed, then you do what you have to do. So in many ways I feel grateful for the flexibility that I've had with my studies. That's absolutely a positive of being in the faculty I am in right now. I don't have somebody looking over my shoulder wondering why I'm not at my desk... someone who expects you to be there for certain times.

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

Being grad students, the flexibility that our work provides is very conducive to the beginning stages of pregnancy. It's awesome! For example we have a midwife appointment tomorrow midday and Jake is able to easily attend that. During the first trimester it was a godsend because I was having some pretty bad symptoms and he just like there waiting on me, so that was very helpful and supportive and it just made me feel better in terms of, you know, how hard it's going, going to be once the baby gets here. It's comforting to know that he would be there for all of that.

I think a graduate student, the lifestyle actually is quite conducive to having a child in the sense that if you don't care about you know, having every toy or playset or every accessory, you're okay. I mean yeah, it's going to be tough financially, but if you're not used too much...if you know that you'll have funding, I think it's probably going to be a good thing. That first year is very important and Jake being able to be there and support me is really important. So I think being a grad student is quite conducive to that.

Stephanie: What about your leisure time for doctoral students? What have been your observations or experiences about that?

Between activities that I'm doing related to my TA and getting ready for comps, at the end of the day I want to just sort of relax and have some down time...watch an episode of The House of Cards. There was a certain point, probably as the PhD program started off, where you start looking at how to be an effective grad student and how you can use your leisure time for this task. You've got to network. So going out for drinks with your colleagues changes from being a relaxing social time to being more like "I should stay because there's a guest speaker here and people are going out to the bar and maybe I could ask an intelligent question or just get some face time. It may be totally useless, but it may not you know. That person may be helpful down the line. It's very awkward, but you kind of put up with it.

I mean I feel like grad school is this big old white men's club. So the types of activities that one participates in— grabbing a beer after class or going away to a lot of conferences or being devoted to academia, I don't know if those necessarily lend themselves to work/life balance or are very practical for a woman unfortunately, if she has a young child at home. You don't see a lot of young moms, or it doesn't matter if they're young moms or not—moms—in those types of environments.

Internal Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

First, we're married and so that was one of the motivating factors for us to kind of get on the baby-having attempt right away. I don't feel like there was any sort of substantial influence of religion, but we very clearly waited until after we were legally married to start trying.

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

I feel like the reason we became pregnant now is a little odd in the sense that I thought that a lot of people my age were having—our friends and family were having difficulties either conceiving or having miscarriages or were having issues during birth and afterwards. I just wanted to be proactive about it.

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

When we were talking about sort of our preferences and our sort of general thoughts around family timing and planning, the main factors that we considered had more to do with biology and the fact that we're both 30 right now. You know it is a trend I think for first-time parents to be a little bit older in this generation than they were in the past for sure.

Stephanie: Why did now feel like the right time to try?

It was sort of not necessarily that right now is the best time, but there is no such thing as the best time. We certainly didn't want to say, "oh well we can't right now" or think that we couldn't consider trying until we're in jobs. It was very much a mutual thing where we both agreed that it made more sense for us to try it and the earlier we kind of got started the better. I think that that's definitely the main factor that went into the decision.

I mean we didn't go into it saying "we want to get pregnant this fall. We want to have a baby in the spring", but you know, it worked out that way so I think in many respects we're very excited about it and very pleased. We're just grateful that we didn't run into problems getting pregnant. We had no idea about any sort of fertility concerns because it's not something that, in our relationship or in previous relationships, had ever come

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

I don't even know if it's true...the idea of needing to have children by 35. I mean for some women you could be safe and have a child and they're in their 40s. I think a lot of it has to do with energy levels. Like I know 10 years ago what I could handle and what I can handle now. So I think age is definitely a consideration in the sense that I'm tired as it is.

I don't necessarily know that I always wanted to be a mom—I think it's changed. It's something that I've grown into wanting. I also believe if I didn't want to have kids, it's totally my prerogative and there's nothing wrong with that. I think it was more something that was kind of solidified in my mind when I met Jake and that was something that we wanted to do together. Like, even before we began dating, one of the qualities that I was attracted to in him was that I thought he would make a wonderful father. I think because I was an only child, I think wanting to have a family—not necessarily a huge family, but a larger family—it sounded like it would be fun and meaningful and rewarding. So I guess I wanted to be what my parents were for me to a child. A little person that you support and guide them through things.

I think, as a woman, being able to have a child is something that can be really tied to your identity. In terms of identity and being able to conceive. It's funny, a co-worker of

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

up. I had no clue and getting pregnant can sometimes be a very long and difficult process for people.

External Factors Impacting Family Planning Decision-Making

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

For my mom, this is going to be her first grandchild. She's very excited. Maryann's parents, I think they were a little surprised more than anything else at first. I know Maryann felt a little—I don't know what the best word is—not necessarily upset but perhaps a bit disappointed with the way her mom in particular reacted.

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

mine just looked at me and she said, "you're a fertile Myrtle. You'll get pregnant right away" and I was like I don't know what that means [laughs]. If that's a compliment or what?

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

My mom, she left India in the midst of her PhD and my father did his master's here. For them, a lot of education is undertaken to have a set career. I mean, I think, for my father he's a little more like there are no set careers anymore...people lose their jobs...they leave their jobs. But I think my mom's concern stems from the fact that I'm not finished my master's and it's been so long. It's taking me so long.

I always ask her about my cousin. She's I think 36 and I asked my mom "oh, is she interested in having kids or that type of thing"? Mom is like "no, she's very focused on finding work and that's their first priority". So I think culturally and across the board, for women there's this huge emphasis to find full-time work or a stable job before they have kids. I don't think Jake and I necessarily ever fell into that because it's kind of a trap, like you need to have a house by a certain time. You need to have a car by a

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

certain time. I mean financial stability makes sense, but it might not fall into place perfectly when you want it to. It may not fall into place at all. So are you just not supposed to have kids or not supposed to get married?

Future Trainee Lifestyle

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

I mean we have our ups and downs, but it's kind of been smooth sailing for us—from the beginning. So this baby thing is going to really change that. It's going to be really different. To add another person in the mix. We haven't been through it yet, but everything we understand about parenthood is that it becomes, obviously, a very sort of central thing in your life. Losing sleep, basically not being able to sleep continuously, being fatigued. It's hard to kind of envision the future when you don't know how out of whack it's going to become. It's kind of what's thrown at you too in terms of literature and what people tell you like—it's life changing right and so that can be really scary. In terms of planning, I think we both are just under the impression that the first six weeks you're kind of dead to the world.

Jake, age 30, second year doctoral student, social science discipline

I'll have to leave the house obviously, because otherwise it would be really, really impossible with my work. There is going to be a trade-off between that and then basically not being able to focus or spend any time at all on those sorts of things while I'm at home. Alternatively, I may just accept that I'll be able to try and focus and do work in like 30-minute bursts.

Hopefully I can have some understanding from the university administrators and supervisors; at least until a couple of months after the immediate aftermath has kind of passed and we develop a pattern or at least a greater comfort level. You can read up on it, but I think until you go through it you would have no idea...how much of your time and energy is going to be focused on this other person.

I know I have my share of responsibilities for what's going to be happening—changing the diapers, cleaning and maintaining the house. We don't live very luxuriously now, and that's not going to change. Right now, I'm earning something from being a grad student and that's obviously something that will need to continue. So taking on TAs or additional opportunities as they come up, that will be important moving forward.

Maryann, age 30, partner, master's student, social science discipline

I mean I understand that if Jake has school commitments or TA commitments that those need to come first for him. I'm very lucky in the sense that it's not like he's at work from 9 to 5 every day. He's around a lot more I think than—I don't want to say a regular parent but like someone in a different situation would be.

If Jake is going to be doing his PhD for the next five years, that's fine for me. If he finishes earlier or later, that's fine. In terms of my own career, I don't know what that looks like right now because I obviously want to stay home with this child for the first year. But afterwards, if we both think that I need to go back to work or if daycare is too expensive and I just need to stay home—those are things that we'll talk about.