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Mother Teachers Living on the Edges: Idealized Conceptions and Miserable Realities

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Mother Teachers Living on the Edges:
Idealized Conceptions and Miserable Realities

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Anthony and our three boys-

Jordan, Dylan, and Austin.

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My adviser Lisa S. Goldstein has been amazingly helpful, encouraging, and supportive throughout this entire process. I am deeply indebted to her for her compassion and never ending support. I am also so very thankful to my participants. It is thanks to their willingness to share not only the joys of their lives with me, but also their innermost turmoil and struggles, that I was inspired to search beyond the status quo and seek out a new and more honest conception of viewing the lives of mother teachers.

Mother Teachers Living on the Edges:
Idealized Conceptions and Miserable Realities

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The goal of this feminist research study was to examine expectations held by society for women who concurrently fill the roles of mother and teacher. This study explored the challenges elementary school teachers face in seeking to combine the role of teacher with the role of mother of young children.

A qualitative study consisting of interactions via interviews and online journals was completed over a two-year time frame with three mothers of one of more infant or pre-school children who also taught full-time at the elementary level.

In recounting their impressions and experiences juggling these two roles, study participants describe drastic contradictions between how they view their lives and how their lives are lived. They depict their lives as ones which flow seamlessly from one set of responsibilities to other, yet the words they use to describe their day to day experiences reveal conflict, guilt and unease.

In order to understand these contradictions, I propose that the lives of mother teachers be viewed in terms of a reality continuum. On one end of this continuum are the idealized, wishful lives of the women, which I refer to as Idealized Conceptions. The other end of the continuum is the reality end, the lives as lived out by the mother teachers- I refer to this end as Miserable Realities. The mother teachers in this study are forced by hegemonic expectations to live their lives at either end of the continuum. Wanting to fulfill societal expectations for them as mothers and teachers, they speak about their lives as if they were lived on the Idealized Conceptions end of the continuum. However, unable to meet these unrealistic and conflicting goals they instead dwell in the land of Miserable Realities.

This research is an attempt to reveal the full spectrum of possibility in the lives of mother teachers- the space between Idealized Conceptions and Miserable Realities- and provide and encourage these women to use such alternate language and imagery to reject dwelling on either end of this patriarchal dichotomy and instead search out new possibilities for description and interpretation of their lives.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Research

MOTHER TEACHERS: LOOKING BEYOND A VEIL OF DISINTEREST

Many women educated as teachers give birth to their first child after first entering the teaching profession and establishing themselves as teachers. On December 26, 2004 the Associated Press ran an article about Unity Grove Elementary School near Atlanta where fifteen out of 47 classroom teachers were currently expecting their first child or had recently given birth. It was anticipated that by the end of the school year at least one teacher per grade level will have returned to the classroom from maternity leave and would be teaching as a mother for the first time.

I refer to women such as these who are mothers to children at home and teachers to children at school as "mother teachers." By naming the situation of mothering and teaching I seek to acknowledge the connections between these two roles and the "motherteachering" jobs both at school and at home.

Due to the frequency of elementary school teachers giving birth to their first child, it appears reasonable to assume that research would have sought out information about the experiences and potential struggles of these mother teachers in order to better support them in their transition from teacher to mother teacher. However, upon examination of this subject, I found that rather than first-time mother teachers having been a focus of inquiry, an aura of secrecy appears to shroud the experiences of these pregnant teachers and new mothers.

I was astounded by this silence. The phenomenon of letting teachers sort out their own adjustment to mothering and teaching seems completely uncharacteristic of the espoused caring nature of elementary schools. Indeed, as a teacher myself, I have been impressed by the compassion and leeway afforded teachers struggling with personal

problems. Colleagues rally to their side; donations of sick days, sharing of lesson plans, and the delivery of hot meals is common. In contrast, sensitivity toward new mothers appears strikingly absent. Maushart describes the changes a new mother experiences to an “earthquake, followed by a flood, followed by a volcanic eruption” (1997, p. 122). I have yet to see any widespread recognition by school staff or researchers of such major storms occurring in the lives of mother teachers.

Rather, it appears that a woman’s new job as mother is something to which she is expected to adapt on her own. It is not as if expectant and new mothers are simply ignored. As any elementary school teacher will likely recount, social committees host many baby showers throughout the year. However, these pleasant, yet fleeting, celebrations in anticipation of a child’s birth appear to mask the underlying problem of lack of support for these women.

I have observed that after a new mother returns from a customarily brief maternity leave, a policy of “I’ll ask, but don’t tell” is often adopted. The new mom may be asked in passing if the baby is sleeping through the night or if their child is a “good baby,” but expectations regarding appropriate replies to these inquiries are narrow in scope. Instead of being truthful, new mothers are expected to smile upon return to their classrooms, claim that they have babies that sleep eight hours in the evenings, and resume teaching and performing the numerous responsibilities expected of all teachers with vigor and enthusiasm equal to that which they displayed before becoming a mother. It is my firm belief that regardless how generous the gifts and delicious the cake at the baby shower, this does not make up for the complete lack of support given to mother teachers upon return to their classrooms. The incongruence between expectations set for mother teachers and the reality of the day-to-day experiences of these women is a loud cry for investigation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Throughout this research process, I have asked many questions. The main questions that have demanded full consideration, pushing themselves time and time again to the forefront of my mind are:

1. How does society's construction of the teaching profession and the job of mother impact how women balance a career as teacher with motherhood? and
2. How do mother teachers seek to negotiate the divide between these two roles?

RESEARCH STUDY DESCRIPTION

In order to seek answers to these questions, this qualitative dissertation shines a light upon how the roles of mother and teacher have been, and continue to be, unfairly and inappropriately constructed and controlled by patriarchal society. I share what I have learned from extended conversations over a period of two years with three primary school teachers who upon onset of the study had recently become mothers. The three women were teaching in a large urban city in a low socioeconomic status (SES) elementary school, which serves a population of mainly Hispanic and African American children. The interviews revolved around how these women viewed their mothering and teaching lives while pregnant as well as how they viewed them upon returning to the classroom from maternity leave and were teaching- with a young child at home. In recounting their lives, the women repeatedly detail an ongoing search for coherence between their home and work lives. They describe the joys and struggles of juggling the responsibilities linked with mothering and teaching and how they have sought to reconcile societal expectations for them. Particularly moving is how many of the stories

these mother teachers tell are of feeling torn between behaving how society expects them to as “good teachers” and behaving in a manner expected of them as “good mothers.”

SOCIETY’S HEGEMONIC GRIP ON MOTHER TEACHERS

In considering the roles of mother and teacher, one might point to the similarities between the two roles and suggest that they could complement each other. One might also be reasonable to assume that in areas involving caring, such as mothering and teaching- often considered “traditional women’s work” (Bilken, 1995, p. 126), the similarities would make the task of combining these roles easier for mother teachers. Unfortunately, this is not the world in which women live and work. It is not the similarities of the two positions which make them so frustrating to perform simultaneously, but rather the societal expectations demanded of them in each of these roles. Our society is dominated by patriarchal influences so strong that even in areas considered the realm of the female where men commonly have little interest in participating, expectations for women still prevail.

Schools are not designed to benefit women. Just like the patriarchal construction of families, they are institutions that foster power over women (Cannella, 1997) and seek to keep them behaving in a manner considered appropriate by society. There is rarely an appeal to unfairness or contradiction in patriarchal expectations since these are contained within unconscious and deeply ingrained traditions, behaviors, customs, and habits (Dalton, 1999). These expectations are also ingrained in the lives of the women in this study. Thus, since patriarchy is internalized and reproduced through individual psyches, women actively participate in the perpetuation of their own oppression. Weir describes this: “The unconscious is understood as the locus of mediation of socio-historical practices and institutions which have become sedimented and rigidified into psychic structures” (1997, p. 135). The women in this study were well aware of the expectations

for them as mothers and teachers and were also fully cognizant of the fact that they were not living up to these expectations, but at the same time, they did not discuss where these expectations might have originated or whether they could be changed.

The participants seemed unaware of the invisible system that has them trapped within sets of interlocking societal structures that tightly grip and seek to control them as mothers and teachers. Therefore, although they admit to sensing anguish in the ways their working and home lives are constructed, instead of naming patriarchy (or anyone/anything else for that matter) as the perpetrator of many of the injustices in their lives, they accept their struggles as the status quo and, albeit unknowingly, embrace the accompanying guilt as a problem of their own. Kendra illustrates the example of teachers giving in to societal demands when, after leaving her four-week-old newborn with a caregiver to return to teach, she explains that she would cry wishing that she was the one caring for the baby, but soon realized: 'What's the point? . . . It just didn't work out that way and you know, I got over it (I 372, WC3)."

RESEARCH FOCUS

Upon conception, this research project had a narrow focus - the personal and professional lives of mother teachers. I had thought that the best way to help women such as the previously mentioned fifteen mother teachers at Unity Grove Elementary School ease their transition from teachers to mother teachers was through discussion and support groups focused upon helping mother teachers integrate their new identities as mothers within their practices as teachers. However, although I still believe that these are certainly worthy endeavors, I now recognize that my thinking was caught in a mode limited by patriarchal expectations. Garey describes this situation perfectly when she writes that the phrase "working mother" uses work as a verb to describe the mother. She clarifies: "It is the mother who works, not the worker who has children." This means that it "is the

mother who must fit into the workplace, not the workplace that must adjust to the needs of the workers with children" (1999, p. 11). Despite my yearning for a tangible, and perhaps simple, solution for helping such women fit back into their roles as teachers, I have come to the understanding that the problems behind the struggles of mother teachers run far deeper than anything occasional after school discussion and support groups might ever hope to solve.

PATRIARCHAL EXPECTATIONS WEIGH HEAVILY UPON WOMEN'S SHOULDERS

As I have stated, during the research process I became acutely aware of the patriarchal values which had been imposed upon both my participant's lives as well as my own. I began to rethink my position as a woman within society and society's accepted conventions of gender, specifically for mothers and teachers. I found that once I became aware of these influences it was no longer possible to look at the lives of mother teachers without first and foremost examining their experiences (and my own) through a lens which focuses upon the massive influence that patriarchal values have had, and continue to have, upon the roles of mother and teacher.

I have come to realize that mother teachers are put into the impossible situation of juggling the expectations surrounding societal conceptions of good teacher and good mother. They are forced into rationing their dedication, caring and love between their students and their children. The main problem they face is that, according to societal expectations, neither job can each be done well without one hundred percent dedication, caring, and love. As things currently stand, if mother teachers continue to give of themselves completely (as demanded by society) to their teaching jobs, time is taken away from their child and they are considered "bad mothers." But if they draw the line and decide to only work the number of hours that they are required by their teaching contracts, they are considered "bad teachers." Since it is impossible to fulfill all of

societal expectations that surrounds each of these roles, mother teachers are trapped and continually forced to make choices in their lives between fulfilling expectations either for them as good mothers or those for them as good teachers.

FEMINIST FRAMEWORK

I have written this dissertation within a feminist framework. This framework not only provides the foundation for this research, but it is woven throughout every aspect of this study. Feminist researchers believe that reality depicted by most of the social sciences is fundamentally distorted and does not provide a complete picture. Simonne de Beauvoir writes that "representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (1952, p. 161). Thus, women's experiences reflected through the eyes of men are not accurate representations of women's experiences.

With this study I embrace de Beauvoir's frustration that women are considered by society as "Other." In her book, The Second Sex, she writes that woman:

> is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other. (Introduction, 1952).

Weir details how femininity, designated as "otherness" is in actuality described as "nonidentity and negativity" (1997, p. 139). Believing this definition of woman as Other inappropriate and unjust, I join a tradition of feminist studies which seek to focus upon women as autonomous independent beings by placing particular emphasis on how gender inequalities are perpetuated both in the work and home lives of women by the institution of patriarchy. I concentrate on how patriarchy dominates the lives of mothers and teachers by continually seeking to suppress attempts at being defined as something different than Other.

Feminists seek a new mythology, one which begins with women and calls into question the methodology, assumptions, and language of the male intellectual tradition (Weiler, 1988). Feminists believe that women themselves are the best people to describe their own situations and experiences. All feminist research, regardless of its variety, shares the underlying assumption that women's voices- both collective and individual- are worthy of being heard. When women speak about their personal experiences, an alternate, more meaningful representation of reality is revealed (Kaplan, 1992). This study is an attempt to share such an alternate, more meaningful representation of reality in the lives of mother teachers.

PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THE TOPIC

My own interest in this subject lies close to my heart. This research study grew out of my own sense of confusion and frustration that I feel about the combined roles of mother and teacher. Before becoming a mother, I taught for four years and then accepted a position as an elementary school assistant principal. An unofficial part of my job was teacher support. It was not uncommon for mother teachers to appear at my office door tired, stressed, and near tears. Over time, different women sat in the chair opposite me pouring out their souls, yet their words echoed similar struggles of the new mothers before them. Coincidently, I had the good fortune to transcribe a series of four interviews that one of my graduate school professors had conducted with women who were working, or had worked, in early childhood settings while mothering young children at home. As I listened to the interviews, the participants' words of joy and anguish could easily have been those of the teachers in my office. They spoke of feeling torn between their child or children at home and the children they taught at school- especially when their own child was sick or feeling especially needy. The mothers felt as if they never had enough time during the day, and often neglected themselves or their marriages in order to get

everything done. Feelings of guilt were often expressed - guilt about leaving their own children with another caregiver, guilt about not being as committed a teacher as they were before they had children. They expressed feeling torn between two loves- teaching and their child or children.

Soon after transcribing the interviews, I gave birth to twin boys. Mirroring my own emotions were the words of Kaplan who in 1992 wrote of her own experiences as a teacher mother: “What I found was that motherhood on any given day was not simply a matter of a role and prescription - what should I be doing? but of desire, a profound pull toward motherhood and towards my child that I had not fully anticipated” (p. 3). Childcare arrangements that my husband and I had made prior to the birth of the twins seemed woefully inadequate. One of the babies had serious health issues. I quickly learned that although I made decisions on behalf of children at school on a daily basis, making decisions about my own children was a completely different experience. Previously I had been able to see things in black and white; it seemed as if having given birth had washed all contrasts to gray. I was unable to make decisions that affected my children without obsessing about whether I had made the right choice. Within days of returning to school at the conclusion of my maternity leave, I was overwhelmed with guilt. Even decisions regarding students at school became more difficult. I now saw things in a completely different manner. I began to recognize that the kids at school needed me more than ever, yet my children at home needed me too. Individual teachers quietly assured me to be patient; I would learn to deal with the frustrations. I did not want to “deal;” I wanted resolution to the feeling of being pulled apart. Family and friends advised me to quit and return to work when my children were older. I did not want to leave the job I loved. Not willing to abandon my students at school, I attempted to combine my responsibilities. I began to bring the babies up to school when I attended

school activities in the evenings or on weekends. It was soon clear to me that adults at school, both employees and parents, considered my decision badly made. I heard numerous comments about how my twins would contact all sorts of illnesses from the schoolchildren. Others wryly commented that we could open up a nursery school if everyone brought their kids to school. I clearly recall one Saturday afternoon the look on my supervisor's face when he stuck his head in my office door to check on how my grant writing was going and found me changing dirty diapers.

My husband bore the brunt of my frustrations. With tears streaming down my face and shaking with sobs, I would try to put into words how it felt in the mornings when I would glance back toward the house after backing out of our driveway and see the nanny waving with the boys in her arms. It felt as my heart was being ripped from my chest. I hated this wonderful nanny who, when I would arrive home at night, would tell me about all the incredible new things the boys had done that day while I was at work.

The entire year I felt as if I were cheating my students, my babies, and myself. I found myself unable to work and live within a system that forced me to sacrifice on behalf of its' goals. After a year of struggling with many of the same issues I had heard expressed by both the teachers at my school, as well as the women in my professor's interviews, out of desperation I resigned from my position. Feeling forced to make a choice between school and home, I felt that I had no real choice but to choose my children.

To my frustration, it seemed as if the boys stopped doing all the wonderful things the nanny used to report on. My husband would come home at night ask me how our day had been and I would break into tears sobbing that I couldn't stand to be alone with them all day long. He would look at me and ask me what I wanted. I had no answers. I didn't understand it myself. How could I not stand to be apart from my children, yet at the same

time long to be not only away from them but with the children of other mothers? I felt as if I had been forced to abandon the job I loved. A bitter taste formed in my mouth.

It didn't make sense to me that in schools where children pass through the doors as early as age three, where faculty and staff openly pride themselves about the child - friendly nature of their school, mother teachers are made to feel isolated and unsupported- as if their struggles and concerns are unique to them - something they have brought upon themselves by giving birth. Although I don't regret having chosen motherhood over teaching, I am resentful for having been made to choose between two loves in the first place. It doesn't seem fair that I was forced to relinquish one love simply because I became a mother and could no longer handle the overwhelming and never ending sense of guilt heaped upon me my society.

Upon conception of this research study, I hoped that I could learn from the participant mother teachers where I had gone wrong, how I could have behaved differently so that I wouldn't have been forced to make a choice I would have preferred not to have made. What I learned was disappointing and disheartening. I quickly discovered that these women didn't have any answers for me. In fact, they were experiencing many of the same struggles that I had. I now know the very same pain and struggles that I experienced are shared by many, many mother teachers- including the three participants in this study.

STUDY IMPACT

Rebuking American society for its "one size fits all" impression of mothers and teachers, Lightfoot writes: "For the most part, the cultural images do not reflect the real, alive people we know who struggle with gracefully combining multiple identities and making sense out of their world" (1978, p. 64). While I wholeheartedly agree with Lightfoot's assessment that our cultural images do not accurately depict the struggle such

women face in their challenge to reconcile their established identity as a teacher with their new identity as a mother, I disagree with the statement she makes in preface to the above listed quote. She writes that “We all cringe at the oversimplified stereotypes of mothers and teachers” (1978, p. 64). In my personal experiences in schools, both as a teacher and a mother, I have seen little cringing by anyone other than the mother teachers themselves. Although the shroud of secrecy veiling the struggles of mothers and teachers may be easier to handle than examining the contradictions and concessions these women face and make on a daily basis, considering the high numbers of teachers who are or who will become mother teachers, I believe it is high time to begin the cringing in a search for at least a few of the likely hundreds of thousands unheard stories surrounding this issue.

The goal of this study is to learn how these mother teachers have sought to reconcile expectations of them as mothers and teachers with what they experience in their day-to-day lives. This dissertation has also been written to give mother teachers words- words of encouragement to recognize their oppression, words to name their oppressor, and words to speak when they wake up and refuse to participate any longer in their own oppression.

WHAT TO EXPECT

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the literature surrounding the roles of mother and teacher. I detail how both of these roles are linked with each other and how they have been constrained and limited through hegemony. In chapter three I describe and justify conducting this research within a feminist perspective, explain the methodology for this study and describe methods used for data collection and analysis. Chapter four consists of three case studies- one for each of the participants. Within each case study I describe the mother teacher’s mothering and teaching history, highlight what is unique about her experiences, and reveal the central theme of her story. In the last

chapter I provide a cross case analysis of the three case studies where I highlight the similarities of their experiences. I also interpret and analyze these findings, as well as propose a new way to look at the experiences of mother teachers and suggest that this alternate view provides mother teachers the languages and images they need to springboard them into seeing and describing their lives in a completely different manner.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to provide the reader a foundation for understanding my belief regarding the need for a more accurate reflection of the lives of mother teachers. I have divided this chapter into three sections. The first and second sections provide an overview of the literature surrounding the roles of mother and teacher respectively. Within these two sections I demonstrate how these roles have been, and continue to be, constructed and controlled by the patriarchal society in which we live. I show that mainstream views of mothers and teachers under the influence of dominant Western intellectual tradition can never accurately reflect the experiences of mother teachers and I suggest the need to re-frame these roles through a feminist lens. Lastly, in the third and final section of this chapter, I describe the research that has previously been conducted on the connections between these two roles and explain how my research fills a gap in the existing literature on mother teachers.

SECTION ONE: THE GENDERED NATURE OF MOTHERING

Disinterest in Mothers and Their Offspring

Within our society, definitions of women by their status as child bearers (single mother, old maid, childless) are accepted as commonplace, while phrases such as "childless man" or "working father" sound out of place and absurd (Rich, 1976, p. 261). Society views mothers, motherhood, and the maternal in a disinterested manner; mothers and their tales are considered private and uninteresting for anyone but fellow mothers. Since caring for children is viewed as women's work (Connell, 1985), mothers are considered "physically and psychologically apart from the world" (Chodorow and

Contratto cited in Thorne, 1992, p. 63). They are expected to live out their lives in what Chodorow and Contratto refer to as “a magic (or cursed) circle” (cited in Thorne, 1992, p. 63).

Reflecting society’s disinterest in the lives of mothers, most academics do not consider an understanding of giving birth and raising children as relational events that significantly change mothers’ lives of much worth (Oberman and Josselson, 1996). To most people, gender is a construct that is rooted in biological differences between men and women. Connell (1987) wrote, “For many people the notion of natural sex difference forms a limit beyond which thought cannot go” (p. 6). Since mothers are not expected to seek out a separate identity from their families, little effort has gone into the development of a psychological theory that adequately describes the mother’s independent existence (Benjamin, 1988).

Expectations for Mothers

Despite the fact that many mothers, whether by necessity or desire, work outside of the home, motherhood remains shaped by, and tied to, an antiquated ideology of the nuclear family (Jetter, 1997). Our contemporary vision of motherhood has been shaped by collective memories and historical images (Lightfoot, 1978) and reflects the orientation of white, middle class, heterosexual men.

The patriarchal family provides a foundation for the gendering of our society (Dalton, 1999) and roots for the gendering of society and the resulting discourse of the good mother can be traced to the rise of Industrialization in the 1870s (Dally, 1983). Until that time, mothers, fathers, and children often worked side by side in their homes and on their land growing crops, spinning, baking, etc. There was no firm concept of mother as caretaker of children and the home until industrialization and urbanization split domestic life into two spheres – one public for the father and his job and one private for

the mother and the children (Thurer, 1994, Kaplan, 1992). Mother's position shifted and was now "idealized- by definition loving, gentle, tender, self-sacrificing, devoted, limited in interests in creating a haven for her family" (Bernard, 1974, cited in Kaplan, 1992, p. 12).

Societal impressions and expectations of mothers remain frozen in this time period (Chodorow and Contratto, 1992). Despite the many changes in the lives of women, American society has held fast to this constructed notion of "good" mother (Jetter, 1997, p. 5). Good mothers are expected to fulfill their role by taking full responsibility for childcare and domestic chores (Schlessinger, 2000 cited by Johnston and Swanson, 2003), by being completely devoted to their offspring, and being willing to sacrifice themselves for the needs of their children (Chodorow, 1979, p. 167). Sikes writes, ". . . traditional notions of nurturance demand absolute commitment to the needs of others . . . If you are being an 'ideal' mother there is no space for you to do anything else" (1997, p. 139). The patriarchal ideology of mothering denies women an identity and sense of self outside of motherhood (Glenn, 1993). Benjamin (1988) notes that there is no psychological theory that adequately describes the mother's independent existence; good mothers are expected not to seek out a separate identity from their families. Kaufman, Westland and Engvall (1997) writes about this clean delineation of the role of mother in our society. "Female socialization in the United States has largely consisted of preparing women for primary responsibilities and allegiance to their families, not for success in a career (p. 3). Women tend to rarely appeal to the unfairness and contradictions in these practices since patriarchy is deeply ingrained in our unconsciousness (Dalton, 1999).

Rich refers to such clearly scripted roles for mothers as "mother manuals" (1976). Mother manuals tell mothers not only how they should think about themselves, but also how society should think about them. Hence, mother manuals provide guidelines by

which mothers are often judged. Ruddick describes this ever present, ongoing judging of mothers as the "watchful gaze of others." She writes, "Teachers, grandparents, mates, friends, employees, even an anonymous passerby can judge a mother by her child's behavior and find her wanting" (1984, p. 112).

Mother manuals leave no room for variation. The traditional, laudable mother is considered Anglo, educated, married, middle-class, and does not work outside the home (Keller, 1994, Collins, 1994). Lazarre complains of this single image American culture expects of mothers.

> Although women are as different from one another as men are, although we have developed into many different kinds of personalities through endlessly varied experiences, although we are born with every kind of human temperament- still there is only one image in this culture of the 'good mother'" (1976, p. viii).

Since mother manuals do not take into consideration the wide variety of ethnicity, cultures and economic backgrounds of mothers in American society today (i.e. African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic and Chicano mothers, lesbian mothers, male mothers and wealthy or poor mothers), diversity with respect to race, class or sexuality in mothers often leads to being labeled a "bad mother" (Jetter, 1997, p. 225-226).

Mother Blame

Blame is nothing new to mothers. Chodorow and Contratto write that a "recurrent tendency to blame the mother" is rampant in our contemporary culture (cited in Thorne, 1992, p. 55). Mother blame is defined as "A psychodynamic tradition that attributes fault to mothers for the range of their children's problems and is based on an acceptance of absolute maternal responsibility" (Abbey, 1995, p. 331). Blame for children's poor performance in school or lack of self-esteem has long been laid upon the shoulders of their mothers (Garey and Arendell, 1999). Often this blame has been in conjunction with

criticism for not practicing heralded mothering techniques such as intensive mothering due to employment outside the home.

The twentieth-century concept of “intensive mothering” requires the mother, not any other caregiver, to put all of her energies into responding to “all the child’s needs and desires, and to every stage of the child’s emotional and intellectual development” (Hays, 1998, p. 8). According to well known and highly regarded pediatrician Dr. Sears, this style of high attachment parenting is the only way to guarantee an emotionally healthy child. Sears writes that “we have found that attachment parented children are more likely to be: smarter, healthier, more sensitive, more empathic, easier to discipline, more bonded to people than things” than the non-attachment parented child (Arnold, 2001). Society believes that women who are unable, or who choose not to heed the advice of “experts” regarding best childrearing practices, are purposefully placing their children at risk. Mothers therefore struggle not just with bearing the burden as child-rearers, but risk becoming scapegoats if their efforts fail (Dally, 1983). With the numbers of women in the work force increasing each year and societal expectations for mothers remaining constant, it is not surprising that a 1997 study by the Pew Center for the People and the Press revealed that American women overwhelmingly believe that the job of raising children is harder than it was a generation ago (cited in Kaufman and Quigley, 2000).

Feminist Model of Mother hood

Feminists seek to set aside expectations placed upon them by society and redefine the experiences of motherhood through the eyes of mothers. Feminists believe that due to society’s tendency to define mothers solely in terms of their ability to give birth, they are cast in a subordinate and restricted role which is often accompanied by correspondingly dull and demeaning responsibilities (Gimenez, 1983).

Feminists struggle with the paradox that motherhood can be both a woman's strength and her weakness (Stanworth, 1990 cited in McMahon, 1995). As a result, feminist positions on mothering tend to oscillate between the view that women's lives should not be constrained by childcare or childbearing and a growing recognition that many women experience raising children as a rich and complex endeavor (Oberman and Josselson, 1996).

Women who choose to write about mothering often do so out of a desire to impact a shift in focus from the children to the mothers. McMahon (1995) as well as Oberman and Josselson (1996) all echo this thought in their work when they suggest that the conventional idea that women produce children be tossed aside and the focus be shifted instead to an examination of how women are transformed as a result of having children. Some feminists suggest that this can best be accomplished by separating the stifling, overwhelming, socially organized work of motherhood from the relationship of mothering. For example, Rich distinguishes between "motherhood as an institution" which she believes reflects the politics of patriarchy, while "motherhood as relations" involves the relationship between mother and child (1976). Feminists like Rich (1976) believe that it is the relationship of mothering that rewards and sustains mothers and they criticize patriarchal society for preventing women from discovering this joy of "motherhood as relations." Such theorists yearn for motherhood minus patriarchy which they believe has the potential to bond women together and release the true essence of mothering (Umansky, 1996).

Feminists often advocate a model of motherhood which heralds the sharing of child care and domestic responsibilities between parents, values empowering familial relationships, and celebrates rewarding employment for women (Ehrensaft, 1983; Held, 1983). According to many feminists, mothers who pursue interests outside the home

and/or experience the joys of rewarding paid employment are likely to be happier and as a result, better mothers for their children (Barnet and Rivers, 1998 cited in Johnston and Swanson, 2003).

Working Mothers

Women in America are confronted with a society that views work and family as oppositional. Since society inextricably links mothers' conduct to their children's care and well being (Hays, 1996), gains for women outside of their roles as wife and mother are believed by society to come at the expense of women's husbands and children (Dinnerstein, 1992). Men who are "good workers" and provide for their families are held in high regard while employed women who also provide for the financial security of their children are in conflict with societal conceptions of good mothers (Garey, 1999). Women are labeled as either "work oriented" or "family oriented." Child centered reasons are used to rationalize, and even to romanticize, staying home full-time (Hunter, 2000 cited in Johnston and Swanson, 2003). Society believes that employed mothers neglect their children and put their family relationships at risk (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky, 1998) whereas their at-home counterparts bond well with and are firmly attached to their children (Peters, 1997).

Even when employed mothers are recognized by society as a necessary evil, society remains firm in its beliefs about expectations for "good" mothers. Regardless of whether mothers work outside the home or not, the assumption is that they are responsible for their children and need to be accessible at all times (Wearing, 1984 cited in McMahon, 1995, p. 233). Thus, women who work for pay are not experiencing a "role redefinition" but rather a "role expansion" (Yogev, 1981). In order to be considered "good" mothers, they must still live up to societal expectations for all mothers by acting

selflessly and submissively and expressing thanks for a world that revolves around their husband and children (Dinnerstein, 1992; Kaplan, 1992; Lightfoot, 1978).

The general impression reflected by American society in popular books and magazines of the 70% of married women with children under the age of eighteen who work for wages outside the home is that of a woman with a briefcase in hand (Garey, 1999). On the cover of the October 26, 2003 New York Times Magazine a picture of an well-dressed Anglo woman sits underneath a ladder with a toddler in her lap. The headline reads, “Why don’t more women get to the top?” The answer is provided for the reader in bold print: “They Choose Not To” (Belkin). The message from this cover tells the story in one single image- good mothers (white, middle class ones) would/should rather be home with their children than climbing the corporate ladder.

This photo and caption also imply that anyone who wouldn’t prefer to make this choice is wrong and a bad mom. In addition, even more significant is the underlying assumption in this article that women even have a choice. In reality, there is only an illusion of choice due to how tightly constrained women’s roles are in society. Once again, societal expectations of mothers have been reinforced; the traditional (and good) mother is white, educated, married, middle-class, and should not work outside the home (Keller, 1994). The issue has been played out very neatly- stay at home and care for your children or work in the cold, callous professional world. Whether this article accurately describes the experiences of such women is an issue in itself. But I wonder about another issue- what about the moms who don’t work anyplace near a corporate ladder? What about the women who are forced to make the choices that a mother teacher must make- having to choose between having children on her lap in her living room or children on her lap in her classroom? All mothers making choices between work and home are rarely faced with simple either/or situations, but women who mother and teach face situations

more similar to and/and. Rather than shy away and see this issue in terms of black or white, right or wrong, this research study delve into ands in order to reveal the complexities in the lives of mother teachers.

SECTION TWO: THE GENDERED NATURE OF TEACHING

In this chapter, I expand my focus from examining society's impact on the role of mother to the construction of the role of female elementary school teacher. I specifically examine how limitations placed upon women in this role are based upon confining, often inaccurate, conceptions of gender. As I write about how these conceptions impact teachers, I seek not only to detail the often negative and limited in scope societal perceptions of female gender, but also the wealth of positive conceptions of female gender advocated by feminists from all walks of life.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, societal concepts and expectations of women are embedded within institutional understandings of gender. Bilken writes that the term gender "refers to the predominant practice of characterizing men and women in relationship to each other" (1995, p. 2). Gal focuses upon gender relations in schools and describes gender as "a system of culturally constructed relations of power, produced and reproduced in interaction between and among men and women" (1991, p. 176).

It is interesting that although teachers at first glance may not appear to have gender as a significant focus in their lives as demonstrated by a lack of articulating their concerns as gender related, Bilken notes that often "speech, centered around the vocabulary of 'mothers,' 'she,' and 'women,' suggests that gender is the central issue" (1995, p. 6). Thus, the lives of teachers are significantly affected by gender whether they focus upon the issue or not (Bilken, 1995). Unquestioned gender regimes in schools lead to the reproduction of gender inequity. When elementary school teaching is culturally constructed as a job for women it is "criticized, controlled, and organized as women's

work" (Bilken, 1995, p. 2). However, despite the commonly gendered division of labor in elementary schools, this remains a subject of little interest for researchers (Menter, Muschamp, Nicholls, Ozga, and Pollard, 1997).

History of Female Teachers

The transformation of teaching from a traditionally male to female career began in the late 1800s when women were first permitted to enter the teaching profession. The "dominance of patriarchal authority" (Grumet, 1988, p. 40) was not threatened since the inclusion of the maternal and believed corresponding feminine characteristics of self-sacrifice and purity were viewed not as an integral part of education, but simply a means to an end. Female teachers were expected to prepare children for citizenship in society (Sunnari, 2003) by providing a transition from maternal nurturance to a patriarchal world.

Maternal power was believed to operate within the private domain of the family and have a limited scope based upon care and reciprocity, on unconditional love and experience, on empathy, empowerment, and mutual interests of mother and child (Dalton, 1999). Teaching was thus considered ideal employment for unmarried women as they were seen as enacting their natural role as "caretakers and nurturers of children" rather than attempting to usurp the power of men (Jilk, 2005, p. 3).

Caring in Schools

The use of the educational institution for the reinforcement of gender ideologies has been occurring since the nineteenth century (Walkerdine, 1992 cited in Maher, 1999) and remains one of the major social forces shaping education today (Connell, 1985). American schools are shaped in a male image; underpinning the power structure of schools is society's association of power with masculinity; this is readily apparent in a school system where most administrators, principals and subject heads are men (Connell,

1985). Authority figures (often male) seek to pass on values of competition, solidarity, and physical prowess while female teachers are expected to prepare the children to learn these values through emotional, supportive, relational, and nurturing means (Abbey, 1995). According to Cannella, schooling "is veiled in the discourse of maternal nurturance . . . Yet female teachers are expected to use the rules, regulations, and language of the patriarchy" (1997, p. 142). Feminine values of "resourcefulness, patience, understanding, expressiveness" (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 62) and cooperation are not valued in the man's world of schools (Shakeshaft, 1986). Instead, they are regarded by authority figures as a transitory necessity until children are civilized (Grumet, 1988), weaned off hugs and hand holding, and are mature enough to adopt the values promoted by administration. Just like mothers, teachers are expected to socialize "their" children on behalf of a dominant group whose values and goals they do not determine (Lightfoot, 1978). It is the female teacher whose (undiscussed) job it is to lead what Grumet (1988) describes as the "great escape." Martin writes:

> Educators tend to think of becoming educated not just as a process of acquiring new ways of thinking, feeling and acting. They also assume that it is a matter of casting off the attitudes and values, the patterns of thought and action, associated with domesticity (1994, p. 234).

This transformation is expected to take place between the ringing of bells which signal, whether teachers are ready or not, that it is time to move on to the next activity (Zehm and Kottler, 2005) and also serve to remind teachers that, lest they forget, they are not really in charge.

Burgess and Carter (1992) coined the term "Mumsy discourse". They connected teaching with mothering through images of caring and nurturance (Goldstein and Lake, 2000). Burgess and Carter (1992) first used the term when they expanded upon a comment from a student in Steadman's pilot study on teacher training (1988) who called

the tendency of women to exhibit warmth, caring and compassion in the classroom as “being mumsy” (Burgess and Carter, 1992). In their research in Britain, Burgess and Carter interviewed small groups of pre-service teachers about their impressions of the division of male and female teachers at the primary level, as well as their own personal reasons for having chosen teaching as a career (1992). Participant responses linked the teaching of young children with images of idealized middle class mothering, and with feminine virtues of nurturance and caring- which Burgess and Carter refer to as the “mumsy” discourse (Goldstein and Lake, 2000). Burgess and Carter write: "The 'sensitive mother' is the spontaneous natural teacher identifying and meeting the needs of the child in an uncontrived common sense way. This is very much a middle class model of mothering . . . " (1992, p. 350).

Similarly, Nias (1989) describes how the term “hegemony of nice” can be used to describe how elementary teachers are perceived as “nice, friendly, warm, kind, gentle” (cited in Goldstein and Lake, 2000, p. 867). Moreover, many women are drawn into the teaching profession due to a strong commitment for caring for children (Hargreaves, 1994). Since connections between teachers and students are the foundation of the work of teachers (Elbaz, 1992), the rewards of teaching most often lie within the realm of these contacts. It is not surprising then, that teachers often mention the importance of nurturance and caring in their classrooms (Hochschild, 1975), and most teachers consider their caring relationships with children a significant source of job satisfaction (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994 as cited in Goldstein and Lake, 2000).

At the same time though, when one combines the expectations that teachers will fall in line with this “mumsy discourse” by exhibiting behaviors in the classroom expected of middle-class mothers with the belief that elementary teachers are always nice and friendly, then teachers are boxed into rigid expectations for how they should behave.

This impression of teachers reinforces the ideology of female teachers as "unfinished, dependent, and emotional," and in need of being guided by men who, unlike women, are "whole, powerful and rational" (Cannella, 1997, p. 139).

Zehm and Kotter (2005) describe how the process of rustout and burnout is a result of the excessive demands placed upon teachers. They explain that the teaching profession is one of the most stressful occupations due to these unrelenting demands and expectations which not only society expects of teachers, but teachers also expect of themselves and of each other. Noddings (1984) notes that many urban teachers in particular "burn out" and Gold (1988) adds that the teachers most likely to suffer are the young and inexperienced (cited in Zehm and Kotter, 2005). The sense of guilt and frustration that many caring teachers face when they are unable to meet their students' needs makes them vulnerable to professional burn out (Hargreaves, 1994 cited by Goldstein and Lake, 2000). In Goodson's research study the overwhelming nature of intense teacher-student relationships combined with the needs of students is demonstrated in a participant quote:

> And given what the teaching conditions are like, and how little you can do for these kids . . . I mean; they're in such terrible emotional, financial, psychological . . . physical condition! And there's so little you can do as a teacher in that situation. There is so little. I mean, they really need you. And you know that. But it is . . . it's just so hard to . . . keep doing that (1992, p. 193-194).

Hiding the Maternal

Feminists seek to explore how gender works in a positive manner for teachers (Bilken, 1995). Currently, mother teachers are faced with their mothering experiences being devalued within the context of school (Grumet, 1981). As a result, mother teachers often experience a collision of expectations, personalities and needs in their schools (Grumet, 1981). Grumet writes that women have been convinced that they are "too

emotional, too sensitive" and that their "work as mothers . . . is valued only by . . . immediate families" (1981, p. 28). Jilk describes this ongoing struggle for teachers: "We are caught in a paradox of knowing that what we do is important and valuable yet often we have to rely on outside 'experts' in the form of researchers, standardized tests, newspaper clippings or administrator reviews to tell us that this is so" (2005, p. 8).

Often, mother teachers respond by adopting a policy of silence in order to avoid disrupting the status quo. Gilligan writes that many women fear "that others would condemn them if they spoke, that others would not listen or understand, that speaking would only lead to further confusion, that it was better to appear "selfless," to give up their voices to keep the peace" (1993, p. x). Research demonstrates that mother teachers choose to defer the preferences of the dominant group, which in this case is the administration (Abbey, 2000, p. 6), by subduing their mothering characteristics while in the presence of faculty and staff at school. In the research by Sikes, referring to parenting it is noted how "the parent teachers felt that they actively had to keep quiet about that aspect of their lives if they wanted to maintain a professional identity" (1997, p. 137).

Bureaucratic Nature of Schools

This study is firmly rooted in Cannella's impression of schools as institutions created by patriarchal assumptions and used to promote patriarchal values and expectations. She describes this in her 1997 book *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education*. Cannella shares how all fields of education have emerged from patriarchal societal structure. With the assumed virtues of patience, silence, and self-denial, women are viewed as ideal for assuming the role of teacher. At the same time, science is constructed as the authority for action to disseminate the "truth-bearing knowledge bases" of the patriarchy (p. 138). Teaching is thus viewed as women's work and the

power of men is justified, creating acceptance for the construction of power roles of men over women.

Cannella (1997) describes how the "professionalization of education" privileges scientific judgments and hierarchical relationships and works to construct patriarchal power over women and children (p. 138). These power roles reinforce the creation of disciplinary and regulatory power over teachers, most of whom are women. Teachers, in turn, judge not just themselves but each other as well based upon a desire to meet these expectations and a yearning to be considered "good" or "normal" (Cannella, 1997, p. 138).

Since these discourses of professionalism are deeply rooted in the same patriarchal hegemony that structures all of western society, male control over females and the accompanying gendered constructs that color our interpretations of the world are rarely called into question as they are accepted as status quo (Lerner, 1993 cited in Cannella, 1997). Acceptance, however, does not translate into feelings of happiness. The highly bureaucratic nature of many schools has been shown to cause much frustration for teachers. Goodson's research, which involved interviewing former teachers, focuses upon what the teachers described as the "oppressive system" in their schools (1992, p. 192). Here a teacher from Goodson's research laments having chosen teaching as a profession:

> I wouldn't do it again myself. There are so many negative things. The harder you work, the less you are appreciated by some people. There is nothing to be proud of. I don't tell people I'm a teacher. Maybe society has a lot to do with it. And too much politics. I don't dislike kids. Even the worst ones. I dislike the system (1992, p. 192).

The teachers in Goodson's research study consistently viewed students in a positive manner and widely condemned administrators as "executors of the arbitrary and excessive controls of the system" and "the source of the most persistent and profound school problems" (1992, p. 193 and p. 195). Liebermann and Miller's research echoes

similar sentiments when they describe the relationship of teachers towards administrators as “one of gaining access to privilege” (1992, p. 12).” Yet, as Jilk describes, teachers confined by the patriarchal institution still yearn for recognition. We “tend to be positioned behind our classroom doors, waiting for someone to walk by, peer through our windows and commend us for what we do” (2005, p. 8).

Grumet writes that when women are "deprived of the opportunity to design the structures of their own lives, their own work, many women, mothers and teachers live through other people's stories" (1988, p. 87). Instead of acquiescing to hegemony and accepting it as status quo, teachers should be encouraged to explore the maternal within education. This goal moves us in the direction of rescuing education from its’ bureaucratic stronghold by men and having it reclaimed by women.

SECTION THREE: HOW MOTHERING AND TEACHING ARE LINKED

In the previous two sections of this chapter I describe how the roles of mother and teacher are controlled by, and commonly viewed within, our society. In this section I will show how mothering and teaching are linked within a feminist interpretation and I highlight the research that has previously been done connecting these two roles.

Mothering and Teaching are Gendered Positions

Mothering and teaching are linked by societal conceptions of gender. Bilken writes: “Both mothers and elementary schoolteachers share social and gendered positions because of their relationship to children” (1995, p. 126). Grumet notes this significance when she writes about the connections between the responsibilities of mothering and those of teaching: “there is a dialectical relation between our domestic experience of nurturing children and our public project to educate the next generation” (1988, p. 5). Bilken also writes about the similarities of the two roles: “Both are interested in the

child's welfare. Both believe in the value of education for the child's future. Both need each other's help to develop an educated child" (1995, p. 131). In her research, Lightfoot goes one step further and melds the roles of mother and teacher into one when she writes: ". . . teachers are invariably and ultimately (at the very core of their being) mothers" (1978, p. 69).

Mothering and Teaching are Both Rooted in Relations

This central connection between mothering and teaching has been identified as relations- a mother with her child or children and a teacher with her students (Noddings, 1992). Abbey emphasizes that the work of mothers and teachers is connected in several ways, three of which include a similar emphasis on relations- fostering growth and change, acceptability, and attentive love. Gilligan (1993) also emphasizes mothering as rooted in a feminine morality that is based on human connection. She describes the hallmark of femininity as relationality- responsive, caring, and empathetic connection with others. Just like mothers with their children, the most important and immediate interactions teachers experience are those with their students (Liebermann and Miller, 1992). Like mothers with their children, teachers are continuously involved in this all-consuming work of establishing caring relations with students.

No Separation of Spheres

Many scholars have written about how the similarities of these roles prevents mothering and teaching from being separated from each other. As previously detailed, Burgess and Carter (1992) have connected teaching with mothering through images of caring and nurturance in what they refer to as the "mumsy discourse" (Goldstein and Lake, 2000). Just like mothers are connected with their children, teachers connect with their students. Noddings believes that the construction and maintenance of these trusting

relationships in schools is made possible and is rewarding to teachers when they view students through the eyes of a mother (1992, p. xii). She writes: “As the infant rewards his caring mother with smiles and wiggles, the student rewards his teacher with responsiveness, with questions, effort, comment, and cooperation” (1984, p. 181). Since the teaching of young children centers around caring for children, and, according to Carol Gilligan (1983) and Nel Noddings (1984), the foundation of caring within schools involves developing meaningful relationships, forging and sustaining connections, and being committed to responding to others with sensitivity and flexibility (Goldstein and Lake, 2000), it is understandable that disengaging from the mothering aspects of their personalities while at school would be difficult for teachers.

Garey addresses this when she writes that one should not attempt reduce one’s thinking about “mother” and “teacher” to oppositional identities competing for time and energy, but rather as different parts to one and the same identity (1999). Feminists such as Noddings share this perception and explain that mothering and teaching are not like hats that can be worn and removed at will. She writes: “‘Mother’ is not a role; ‘teacher’ is not a role” (1984, p. 175). Mother teachers are both mothers and teachers throughout the day and these two parts of their existence cannot be separated in two different identities or reduced to list of responsibilities needing to be fulfilled at a particular time and place. Acker addresses this when she writes how teaching “shares with women’s work in the home . . . a lack of boundaries” (1996, p. 122). Just as a teacher worries at school about her child she dropped off at day care with a runny nose, so do teachers fret about their students while at home. A participant in a 1992 research by study by Liebermann and Miller (1992) tells about how her students permeate not only her conscious, but also her unconscious, state: “I dream about them. I have nightmares about them. I can’t lose them.

It is worse on vacation. When I'm in school and it's late October and I've accepted that I'm really back, then the dreams finally stop" (p. 10).

Teachers who balance mothering and teaching possess unique and meaningful viewpoints that deserve highlighting. Maxine Greene, in the forward to Biken's book *School Work*, calls upon the importance of examining the intersections of roles in the lives of mother teachers. "Because teachers themselves are so seldom consulted, the integral relations between their work as wives and mothers has been ignored. There is much to be discovered where teacher identity and a person's identity as a woman intersect . . ." (1995). In this research study I try to do just that- by sharing the uniquely meaningful views of their lives as mothers as seen through their own eyes. Just as mothers are constrained by patriarchal expectations as a result of the discourse of the good mother, so too are teachers limited by the discourse of professionalism. These discourses are very similar in nature and results in behaviors of mother teachers being influenced and controlled by patriarchal expectations. In this study, I seek to highlight the participants' impressions of motherteachering in a world which isn't particularly interested in the sharing of their stories, at least any which are outside the realm of good teacher and good mother.

Chapter Three: Research Perspective, Methodology and Methods

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to learn more about how mother teachers perceive the frequently conflicting expectations of them in their dual roles of mother and teacher. I also examine how the patriarchal influences of society impact women who fill the roles of mother and teacher and how mother teachers negotiate this divide.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS WHICH BUILT THE FOUNDATION FOR THIS STUDY

Upon conceptualizing this research study I had a wealth of questions. These questions became more focused over time and, as previously detailed, can be summarized in two overarching focuses of inquiry. These are:

1. How does society's construction of the teaching profession and the job of mother impact how women balance a teaching career with motherhood? and
2. How do mother teachers seek to negotiate the divide between these two roles?

In seeking answers to these questions, I designed a research study that permitted me to search out women who were simultaneously mothering and teaching young children.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter, I will provide the reader with specific information about how this research study was conducted. I first discuss the feminist perspective upon which this research study is based and how my feminist interpretation has influenced the design of

this research study. I then discuss the use of case studies in qualitative research and my reasoning for having selected this method of sharing my data. Recruitment and selection of participants is then described and information about the setting and brief descriptions of each of the three participants are given. In conclusion, I discuss data gathering and analysis techniques used.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

This research study has been conducted and written within a feminist perspective. Collins asserts that research from a feminist perspective is most appropriate for research on teachers, in particular mother teachers because of the cultural constructions on gender that have shaped and limited the personal and professional lives of female teachers (1998).

According to Harding, one of the defining features of feminist research is the belief that women's experiences, ways of knowing and voices- both collective and individual- are worthy of study (1987). Feminist research attempts to incorporate the female perspective into social reality. Feminists often study experiences that are unique to women- menstruation, menopause, motherhood, rape, childbirth, the experience of being a wife etc. This common focus does not suggest that feminist researchers have the same perspective. Instead, what is shared is the basic tenet that "females are worth examining as individuals and as people whose experience is interwoven with other women" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 241). As Wadsworth describes, feminist research "is not merely research `about' women, but instead is research `for' and `by' women" (2001, p. 3). The goal of this research study reflects this thinking- it has been done by a woman in conjunction with women and it is primarily for women. It honors the participants' experiences and encourages other women to share their experiences as well.

Feminist research draws directly from women's impressions of living in a world in which they are subordinated to men on account of their gender. Our society is dominated by an androcentric worldview; it communicates the male experience and is based on male assumptions and perspectives (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986). Maguire agrees: "A male view of the social world has become the view" (1987, p. 82). As a result, females—their experience, assumptions, and perspectives—are often excluded as subjects of study, as researchers, and as interpreters of results (Belenky et al., 1986). Gilligan explains that these interpretations "eclipse the lives of women and shut out women's voices" (1993, p. xii). Feminist epistemology seeks to disentangle women from these stories of patriarchy- what Rooney refers to as "other people's stories" (1986).

The need for this can been seen in the reality that although one will find that much has been written about mothering, often it has not been written from the perspectives of mothers (Dinnerstein, 1992; Kaplan, 1992; Lazarre, 1976). Kaplan writes that when this happens not only are women's experiences and concerns are left unspoken, but their voices are silenced (1992). For this reason, it is important for this study that not only that women be the focus of study, but that the voices of the mother teachers themselves be heard clearly.

There is no "politically correct" method of feminist research (Reinharz, 1992). A feminist perspective is not a list of methodological choices (theory and analysis concerning how to conduct research) and methods (data gathering techniques) that dictate how a study should be organized and implemented. Rather, feminist research is generally considered "feminist" if it is grounded in feminist values and beliefs (Maguire, 1987, Ollivier and Tremblay, 2000). Feminist research does not claim to speak for all women. Instead of acknowledging one unified feminist research methodology, which leads us in the direction of "objectively" seeking one truth and one knowledge, feminist research,

regardless of its variety, shares the underlying assumption that there is no one woman's way of knowing, but instead women's ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986).

Feminist theorists use the term epistemology to refer to women's "ways of knowing", "women's experiences," and also "women's knowledge" (Alcoff and Potter, 1993, p. 1, cited in Ardovini-Brooker, 2000). Feminists assert that this "multiplicity of women's voices," is not only worthy of being heard, but will result in the revelation of multiple truths (Duran, 1991, p. xiii). This is reflected in this study by the experiences of the participants being viewed not as representative of the voices of all mother teachers but rather as reflections of three of many.

How Has My Feminist Perspective Influenced this Research?

I have grown up in a world where I reap the benefits of the work of my feminist predecessors. These include: the right to vote, the right to own and inherit property, the right to divorce my husband, and the right to equal pay. Feminists today often have it all- careers, children, spouse but yet struggle with how to live with this "all" within the constraints of gender placed upon them by society. My personal sense of feminism centers on connections between how women see and know the world (Belenky et al., 1986). Men are characterized as individuals seeking power and status; they value independence and position themselves within a hierarchical order. This compares with women who tend to see themselves within community of connections, and value intimacy, friendship, and interdependence.

The gender difference between women and men is central to how I see myself as a feminist. My personal understanding of feminism centers around intangible, and relational feelings of interconnection; it lies in my experiences as a daughter, wife, teacher and most important to me, mother. It encompasses the experiences and feelings I have had in these roles that inextricably link me to other women- women who have cared

for a dying parent, women who have promised to remain faithful to their partner, women who have experienced the mind numbing excruciating pains of labor and, among the myriad of life-long experiences, women who have struggled to balance the joys of teaching with the joys of motherhood.

My feminist perspective has been played out in how I have connected with participants, listened to their stories, and ultimately shared their stories with you, the reader- not just by simply using their words as the departure for my study (Clough, 1994), but seeking to use them as the journey itself. It is my hope that in the unveiling of their stories my written words will prove transparent while those of my participants will shine forth and be remembered. I will know that I have been successful if my written presentation has as significant an impact on those who read it as the impact I have had hearing the words of the mother teachers first-hand.

CASE STUDIES

Within descriptive qualitative research there exists a multitude of methods available to researchers. Case study is an inquiry method that seeks to examine a phenomena within its' real-life context (Yin, 2002). Although the term case study is often used interchangeably with research terms ethnography, field study, and participant observation, I am using the term case study as a form of descriptive qualitative research and defining it here as research which focuses on a specific group of people.

Feminist researchers acknowledge the power and authority in the written representation of research (Stanley and Wise, 1983). Keeping this in mind, I have carefully considered how to represent what I have learned from this study. When speaking with study participants I was impressed by how often stories and feelings simply flowed forth; often there was no need for me to say a word. Consequently, striving to stay in line with what seemed most natural in reflecting not only the content

but also the tenor of my interviews, I have chosen to share participant's stories through the use of case studies. Throughout writing I kept in mind the counsel Narayan was given by a guru, Swamiji, who advised: "When you tell a story . . . You should first look at the situation and tell it. Then it turns out well. If you just tell any story any time, it's not really good. You must consider the time and place and shape the story so it's right. All stories are told for some purpose" (1991, p. 123 as cited by Noddings, 1996, p. 22). The stories I tell are told with the purpose of sharing my three participants' experiences, joys and struggles of motherteachering as they shared them with me.

Feminists recognize case study as ideal for feminist research. A case study is a story that presents in narrative form details of events; it has a plot, characters and dialogue (Boehrer, 1996). It strives for a holistic interpretation of the focus of study rather than seeking a universal, generalizable truth. Case studies explore answers to questions such as "why" and "how" by sharing as much as possible about the study participants through the use of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973).

Merriam gives researchers conducting case studies several suggestions in order to combat the questioning of validity, reliability, and generalizability of their research (1988). I used four of these suggestions to guide me in my research:

1. Prolong the Processes of Data Gathering
2. Employ the Process of "Triangulation"
3. Conduct Member Checks
4. Engage in Peer Consultation

Prolong the Processes of Data Gathering

My goal in this research study was to discover how my participants viewed and interpreted their experiences as mother teachers. Trustworthiness was sought by allowing for prolonged contact with each of the participants. Lincoln and Guba describe the

importance of spending sufficient time with research participants as prolonged engagement (1985). Once I had met with my participants twice and I had learned much of their history and interpretations of their present situations, it seemed appropriate to let some time pass between our face-to-face interviews. During these breaks, we would maintain contact via e-mail. The duration of the contact, from initial to final interview, was an average of just under one year with each of the three participants.

Employ the Process of Triangulation

I have developed this qualitative study using communication – written and oral - between my participants and me as the primary data collection method. I used multiple and varied sources of data (oral interviews as well as written communication, (e-mail and journaling) to learn as much as possible about how the study participants balanced mothering and teaching (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen,1993; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Using multiple sources of data is commonly called "triangulation" and increases the reliability and validity of the data gathered and leads to credible findings (Denzin,1978).

Conduct Member Checks

Soliciting feedback from research participants, commonly called member checking, is particularly important in feminist research studies. Since feminist studies seek to reveal the words of the participants themselves, it is important to demonstrate the credibility of this by giving participants the opportunity to review and make changes to materials relating to his/her portion of the study (Schwandt, 1997).

Throughout the duration of this study, I conducted member checks in an effort to help ensure that I was accurately understanding and describing my participants' experiences and impressions. I frequently asked follow-up questions regarding what the

participants said in interviews, either during the interview, by e-mail, or in subsequent interviews. Participants were given copies of interview transcripts and encouraged to respond and make changes and additions via e-mail or orally. Although the participants were very willing to respond to specific questions I had about comments they had made in interviews, none of them seemed particularly interested in reading and commenting on copies of transcripts I provided. For example, in an e-mail, I ask Kendra is she had had the chance to read the transcript I had dropped off at her school and she responds: “I really wanted to. But I’ve just been so busy. You have no idea” (WC#2). It was disappointing to me that the women appeared not particularly interested in reading their own words. I suspect that, as Patricia told me, they assumed that what they had told me was a fair representation of their feelings and experiences. Patricia e-mailed me: “I really enjoyed talking to you. I glanced at the transcript and everything is just like I said” (WC#2).

Although I e-mailed copies of the case studies to each participant, no one responded asking for any changes. I am not certain if this is because they did not have the time to read their case study, or if they did not have any comments or suggestions. Had I had more time I would have liked to arrange follow up interviews with each woman to discuss the case studies and my interpretations. Both formal and informal member checking is considered by Lincoln and Guba as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (1985, p. 314). My goal in using multiple levels of member checking was three-fold. The goals were to help me avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding by alerting me to my own subjectivity and biases and help me to produce more trustworthy interpretations (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

Engage in Peer Consultation

Another means that I used to reveal my biases and avoid potential misinterpretations is by close collaboration with a peer. According to Lincoln and Guba, the role played by the "peer reviewer" in qualitative investigations is an important component in establishing the trustworthiness of a research study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Peer review occurred during data and document analyses and intensively during the writing process. Peer debriefing helps build credibility by providing review of hypotheses and emergent designs as well as serving as a soundboard for ideas and concerns (Erlandson et al., 1993). Lincoln and Guba (1985) confirm that debriefing sessions provide the researcher the opportunity for catharsis: “The debriefer who listens sympathetically to these feelings, defuses as many as possible, and assists the inquirer to devise coping strategies makes an important contribution to the quality of the study” (p. 308).

My peer debriefer was recommended to me by my dissertation adviser. The peer debriefer was also writing her dissertation at the time that we first began working together and defended her dissertation just as I was beginning data analysis. Being a mother teacher herself, she had the ability to relate well to the words of my participants, yet not having met them face-to-face and shared in the emotional turmoil of their lives as I had, she had more of a detached stance which permitted her to read my interpretation of their words in a less biased manner than I could having grown so close to the participants.

I found having a peer debriefer reassuring in that it helped ensure that my biases were not clouding my interpretation. For me, this role was particularly helpful. For example, my peer debriefer was quick to point out areas where I had neglected to probe more deeply with my participants. I found this especially helpful because, having become good friends with them, I began to feel as if I were intruding too much into their lives.

For example, my peer debriefer wrote: “This is an interesting quote. Is there more to this? How did this make Laura feel- anything beyond ‘really nice’?” Another example is when she wrote: “How did these women view their relatives who were mother teachers? What status did they see them having, etc.? How did that affect their decision not to teach?” Because of these helpful questions, I often followed up with participants in my online journal asking for clarification on their comments.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants for an inquiry in order to maximize understanding of particular phenomena within a certain context. Because generalization is not a concern in qualitative research, random sampling was not a meaningful way to determine participants for this study. Patton (1990) believes that purposeful sampling should be used to help find information-rich cases. She defines such cases as “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169).

Based on this thinking, I elected to select participants in a purposive manner. I hoped that by doing this I would find participants who were not only eager to participate, but who also had much to share about my topic (Erlandson et al., 1993). I first established relevant criteria and then sought to recruit participants who met those criteria (Schwandt, 1997). This strategy is known as criterion based sampling. I was looking for married females teaching grade three or below at public elementary schools who were mothers of one or more pre-school aged or infant children.

After having secured permission of the large urban school district’s central office where I intended to conduct the research, I met with administrators at ten different elementary schools. According to the principals with whom I met, none of them had teachers who met my research criteria. Since these schools had very low rates of teacher

attrition and correspondingly, I suspect, an older aged teaching faculty, I looked for a newly built school in a lower income area of town in the hopes of finding more teachers new to the profession there. My thinking proved correct. The principal at T. Elementary School (Principal Smith) agreed to allow me to work with the teachers at her school and provided me the names of three teachers whom she believed met my sample requirements. Two of the three teachers suggested by the principal were interested in participating. Soon after, one of the two teachers contacted me to withdraw from the study. She had arranged to job share her teaching position in the fall so that she could spend more time at home with her children, but her husband lost his job over the summer and she needed to look for a full-time teaching position order to support her family. She explained to me that she doubted that she would have enough time or energy to participate in my study.

Further recruitment was made through a "snowball" technique (Ezzy, 2002), where informants nominate their acquaintances as prospective participants of a study. For example, one of my participants suggested that I contact one of her fellow teachers to see if they might be interested in participating. This person agreed to be my second participant and she, in turn, encouraged a fellow teacher of hers to participate as well. This was my third participant. Over the course of the next year, two other teachers expressed interest in participating in my study. After meeting with both of them twice, I felt it best to conclude the interviewing. One of the women revealed that she had decided to stay home with her new baby and therefore no longer met my previously established criteria. The other woman shared with me in the second interview that she was in the midst of a difficult separation. She was understandably very preoccupied with the circumstances of her divorce and the future of her pre-school son and infant. In our interviews, she had great difficulty not focusing on her marital problems. I felt

uncomfortable repeatedly redirecting the conversation, and since she no longer met the study criteria of being married, we opted to end our interviews.

Feminist researchers have received criticism from both inside and outside the feminist community for downplaying differences between women of varying cultures and socio-economic situations. hooks is critical of grouping women together simply because women in general have been the victims of sexism. She asserts that there is little indication that this connecting thread can be stretched to forge a common bond among all women (1984). Other feminist researchers now consider diversity a "new criterion for feminist research excellence" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 253) and many feminist researchers now seek to purposefully expand their focus to meet the needs of all women (Ollivier and Tremblay, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). Yet other feminist researchers argue against studying women whose cultural, racial, or social background differ from their own. Dinnerstein (1992), who concentrated her research on a population similar to herself, justifies her decision in this manner. She writes:

> Concentrating on white, middle-class women provides detailed accounts of the interaction between the prevailing ideologies and personal choice while at the same time demonstrating how race and class privilege interact with gender oppression . . . it is clear that the participants have had access to a range of alternatives and resources that testify to their race and class position. That even this privileged group has been circumscribed in its aspirations and accomplishments attests to the continuing power of gender in defining lives (p. xi).

In my dissertation proposal, I opted to take the later choice for my study and study women like myself. In my dissertation proposal, I wrote:

> It is my belief that I can best understand stories similar to what I personally have lived. For this reason, I will mirror my sample criteria from that of Ruddick in her essay “Maternal Thinking,” cited in Thorne (1992) who writes: “I draw upon my knowledge of the institutions of motherhood in middle-class, white, Protestant, capitalist, patriarchal America, for these have expressed themselves in the heterosexual nuclear family in which I mother and was mothered” (p. 78).

However, finding women who met my study criteria proved to be laborious enough without considering the ethnicity of willing participants. Simply put, I was thrilled to have anyone agree to participate in my study and was not prepared to turn them down based on their ethnicity. As a result, my six-month search for participants led me to 1 Hispanic woman, 1 African American woman, 3 Anglo women, and 1 Asian woman. Three of the women completed the study from beginning to end. Their ethnicities were: Hispanic, African American and Anglo. I feel compelled to reinforce that the ethnicity of my participants was coincidental and, although I was pleased to have been able to speak with a diverse group of women, just as these three women should not be viewed as representative of all mother teachers, they certainly should not be viewed as representative of mother teachers of their ethnicity.

All of the women with whom I spoke were first contacted by phone or in writing and I explained my study. Our initial "get to know each other" meeting was in person and again I explained my focus, let them read the consent form and ask questions. All of the women signed the consent form in this initial meeting and were told that we would start the interviews at a later date. This allowed them to the opportunity to ask questions or decline participation several times and in several ways (in person, via e-mail or phone) prior to the first interview. In addition, mindful of attempting to equalize the power of researcher and participant, several times during the course of the study I reminded them that they could withdraw at any time without repercussions. As previously noted, one woman did just that. Erlandson et al. cite the importance of establishing fairness in this manner noting that informed consent obtained prior to commencing research must be renewed continually because of the shifting nature of human context and power relationships (1993).

SETTING

Although this was not my initial aim, all three of the participants taught at the same elementary school. T. Elementary School is a 90,000 square foot facility in a large urban school district in Texas built at a cost exceeding $11,000,000 which opened in the fall of 2001 and serves children in grades 1-5. The school is situated between several low-income apartments and a lower middle class neighborhood. The ethnic make-up of the school's student population is 51.9% Hispanic, 45.1% African American, 1.6% Asian and 1.4% Anglo. The grade levels each have between 5 and 9 classrooms – predominantly bilingual classes in the primary levels and ESL in the higher grades.

The physical structures of the school are to be envied. Each grade level at T. has its own "pod." Grade level classrooms are connected with common areas for that grade level only- restroom, patio area, teachers' workroom and teachers' conference area. Each teacher is provided a laptop computer and the classrooms are all wired for technology. In addition, each grade level has its own set of wireless laptops. Academically, T. has not fared very well since opening its' doors. In its first year of operation, T. was cited by the Texas Education Agency as a low performing school. As of the school year 2002-2003, T. received Title I funds.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

At the conclusion of the study, three women had begun and ended the interview process with me:

Patricia- Patricia is the mother to a 1 year-old boy. She graduated with a degree in journalism with an emphasis in advertising and a minor in business administration. Patricia worked a variety of jobs until she took the advice of her sister who was a teacher and returned to school to become a teacher. Patricia worked as a secretary for an engineering firm during the day and attended classes at night. After three years she

earned a Master's degree and a teaching certificate. Pat has been teaching at the elementary level for four years.

Kendra- Kendra is a mother of two children- ages 4 and 2. At the beginning of the study she was teaching in a bilingual first grade classroom. The second year of participating in the study, Kendra accepted a position as mathematics coordinator for her school. Kendra attended a private Christian University three hours away from her home. After three and a half-years in college she finished her coursework for a major degree in Spanish and a minor in Child and Family Studies. Kendra came home to prepare for her upcoming wedding to her high school sweetheart and was thrilled to be hired as a long-term substitute in a bilingual kindergarten classroom. Shortly after, Kendra completed alternative certification and has been teaching at the elementary level for eight years.

Laura- Laura is a mother of three children- two boys- ages 4 and 2 and a daughter born toward the end of the study. Although Laura was born in California, once her parents had saved the money they needed by working in California, the family returned to Argentina. After Laura's wedding, encouraged by the poor economy in their homeland, Laura and her new husband moved to the United States to save money like her parents had done and planned to return at a later time. After a few years they made the decision to remain in the United States. Laura attended classes at a university and three years later she earned a Masters degree and was certified in elementary and bilingual education. When Laura began the study she was teaching bilingual third graders and the following year was switched to second grade. In the middle of this year she gave birth to a third child- a daughter, and decided to resign from her teaching position and stay home with her children. Laura had been teaching six years at the elementary level.

Although all of the women knew each other and, in fact, Kendra had encouraged me to contact Patricia about the study, they refrained from ever mentioning each other or

shared colleagues by name other than Principal Smith. As a result, it was difficult for me to make connections between their joined school lives. Kendra and Patricia each knew that the other was participating in my study but, as far as I know, did not discuss it with each other. I also did not share what I had learned from one participant with the others, nor did I mention the names of the teacher mothers participating in the study.

DATA GATHERING

Interviews

I found that interviews had a unique ability to connect me to my participants; face-to-face interviews simply felt right. For this very reason, interviews are a common means of data collection in feminist research. Comments by participants made in interviews are indicated by an "I" followed by the number line(s) of the comments in the interviews. During face- to-face interviews I was able to see non-verbal cues which would be have been impossible in telephone interviews or surveys. I modeled my interviews after a technique described as "emergent interviewing." Unlike an interview that is led by the researcher, the informant leads emergent interviews. After introducing the focus, the interviewer mentions only those things that the informant has introduced into the topic of conversation. Therefore, the informant leads the conversation. In such interviews, the past is reconstructed, the present is interpreted, and the future is predicted (Erlandson et al., 1993).

It was my hope that using such an interview technique would guide me to the things that my informants believed most applicable to my study- rather than topics and questions which I believed were applicable, but in reality might not be significant for my informants (Schwandt, 1997). In actuality though, while analyzing the data, time and time again I found myself frustrated that I had opted to use this technique. In retrospect, I

believe that this was a significant limitation of the study. In particular, although allowing the women to lead the conversation was a good thing, I would have liked to have built a foundation of understanding between myself and the participants by asking all of the participants the same questions at the beginning of the study. And, once themes began to emerge from our conversations, I would have liked to have been able to ask the women who had perhaps not mentioned a topic previously while the others had, how she felt about this issue.

I had originally wanted to meet as a group- the three participants and me, but the women did not seem particularly willing to discuss what we had shared in our interviews with each other. Although they did not say this in words, whenever I mentioned this possibility, their stiff body language and silence indicated that this was not something that they would enjoy. Ultimately, I decided not to meet as a group when Kendra was promoted to math specialist. As one point in our interviews, Laura commented that one of Principal Smith's "helpers" had been in her classroom criticizing her. "And then someone comes in- another one of her helpers, she comes in and she also says we're also supposed to have w word wall and all these things" (2080-2081)! I strongly suspected that this had been either Kendra or Patricia since they were both assisting Principal Smith at that time in ensuring that teachers were complying with principal's requests in preparation for the state evaluation visit. As a result, I thought it was best to avoid forcing the teachers to meet with each other as this wasn't something they were interested in doing.

I interviewed participants between 4-6 times. I did not set time limits on interviews- minimum or maximums- in order to allow for stopping or extending of interviews as appropriate. The initial interview with each informant ranged in length from 45 minutes to 1 hour. Subsequent interviews ranged between 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours. I made every effort to interview participants in a location of their choice where we were

able to discuss the issues in a private and relaxed setting. Participant preferences for interview locations included coffee shops, teachers' classrooms, restaurants, teachers' homes, and a "paint your own pottery" shop. I offered to pay for babysitting each time the participants met with me. Of the three participants, only Laura accepted my offer.

I tried to be mindful of stress that might be the result of discussion on the issues I raised. If a topic surfaced during an interview that seemed particularly sensitive and the location or timing perhaps not the best to discuss that issue at that point in time (i.e. class about to return to the classroom after music), I would make a mental note of the topic and shift the discussion with the intent to come back to the sensitive issue at a more opportune location or time. The long period of involvement (ranging from 1 to 2 years) allowed for us to develop trust and rapport with each other and avoid feeling rushed in interviews because we knew that we could always discuss things in subsequent interviews or e-mails. Over the course of the interviewing process, e-mails were sent to the participants asking for additional information on topics mentioned by them in the interviews. Participants responded to these e-mails in writing. Participant comments that were communicated to me in writing are indicated by "WC" for written comment.

The use of different methods of information, such as interviewing and asking for written responses from respondents is a mode of triangulation suggested by Lincoln and Guba to help establish confirmability- the degree to which the data can be confirmed by others (1985). All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed by me or a paid transcriber. Participants received copies of the transcribed interviews and were encouraged to make comments and additions. Although the participants repeatedly said that someday it would be interesting to read through the interviews again, or let their children read through them when they are older, changes or requested deletions were never requested.

When first designing this research project I briefly considered interviewing not only the mother teacher participants, but also their husbands, children and the school administrators at the school where these women worked. After reflection, I came to the decision that I should only speak with the mother teachers. From the very beginning I have been interested in how mother teachers interpret their lives for themselves. My decision to limit my interviews to mother teachers only is supported by a quote from Minh-ha, cited in Abbey (1995), which simply yet convincingly states: “Motherhood as lived by women often has little to do with motherhood as experienced by men” (p. 35). Since I was not searching for the “truth” in this study but rather the essence of my participants own experiences and their interpretations of mothering and teaching simultaneously, there was no need to speak with others.

Dialogue Journal

Another means that I used to learn about my participants was through the use of an e-mail dialogue journal. Vygotsky notes, "for reflection to occur, the oral and written forms of language must pass back and forth between persons who both speak and listen or read and write--sharing, expanding, and reflecting on each other's experiences" (cited in Belenkey et al., 1986, p. 26). My hope was that this informal method of data collection would provide me with insights to which I would not have been privy had I only had an oral means of sharing thoughts. According to Goldstein, “entries are not meant to be thoughtful or well-crafted essays, but rather gut-level and immediate responses to particular experiences, situations, or prompts” (1997, p. 34). The dialogue journal method I used was a good means to keep in touch with participants throughout the research process, between interviews, and also a good means to ask for clarification regarding comments made by informants from interviews. The journal was used most frequently

during the span of the initial interview through the last to ensure correct understanding of memories and experiences shared.

Reflexive Journal

Throughout the duration of the research project, I recorded my thoughts and observations of the research process as well as methodological decisions about the project in a reflexive journal. Journals are commonly used with research in feminism-informed classrooms (Brookes and Kelly, 1989, cited in Goldstein, 1997). Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) refer to such a journal as a "log." "The log is the place where each qualitative researcher faces the self as instrument through a personal dialogue about moments of victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases, and ongoing ideas about method" (1991, p. 69). Connelly and Clandinin write that journals are ideal places for researchers to record reflections about ongoing practices [and reflections about these practices] (1994). In addition, a journal serves as a means to debrief the emotional experiences associated with qualitative research. Since part of feminist research is an examination of the researcher's feelings and opinions toward the topic studied, a reflexive journal is a good tool for helping the researcher do just that. I kept my journal from the beginning of the research process through the end. I agree with Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) who note that biases are much easier to recognize looking over what one has previously written in a journal. According to Erlandson (1993), "the reflexive journal supports not only the credibility but also the transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study" (p. 143). Dependability demonstrates that the inquiry process was logical, traceable and documented, and confirmability shown that both data and interpretations are not figments of the researcher's imagination (Schwandt, 1997).

DATA ANALYSIS

A large part of my time was spent reviewing transcripts and e-mails. Although I had originally intended to code all data and even designed a coding scheme with definitions, when I started the process, coding communications with participants seemed completely contrary from all the approaches I had taken up to this point. I took a break from the coding and instead took to reading and re-reading oral and written communications with participants. On a pad of paper I would scribble things that seemed to stand out in importance for my participants. Although I had had every intention to complete my initial coding and continue with chunking and labeling (axial coding) in order to identify emerging themes (selective coding), one day it occurred to me that this would be not only a waste of time- my themes were scribbled on the pad on my desk- but also if I choose to return to dividing and sub-dividing the words of my participants I could very well risk missing the themes introduced by their words and perhaps impose themes of my own by finding their words which fit my themes. My participants had given me the themes in their words, not only was there no need for me to continue to painfully rip the words of my participants apart in order to divide them into codes, it would be wrong to do so. Throughout the study I listed, comforted, laughed, and even cried with my study participants. How could I have ever followed a certain procedure or protocol and stayed true to these women? As a result, I have used the themes that I first identified around which to weave my prose. This is generally referred to as holistic coding. Instead of breaking the evidence into sections, holistic coding looks for patterns among the data as a whole as well as patterns that give meaning to the case study.

Working with the general themes which emerged from data analysis, I selected several themes for each participant which seemed particularly applicable to their case based upon comments they had shared with me in interviews and e-mails. Some of the

themes were similar across the three case studies, but many were not. This revealed the unique nature of each participant's experiences. From the written case studies I was able to refer back to the general themes which I had originally identified. These themes were used as the backbone of my cross case analysis section. Finally, I began the process of data interpretation- a long and laborious process. It was only after many days of thought and reflection that I was able to put down in words the holistic sense of the data that I had felt all along.

Chapter Four: Case Studies

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I share how each of the three women in this study described their experiences as mothers and teachers. Case studies are often used in research seeking a holistic appreciation of a topic. In order to achieve a general understanding of this nature it is necessary to explore, in an in-depth and thorough manner, the experiences of individuals. Such exploration demands the use of thick, rich description. In re-reading transcripts of our interviews, e-mails and written notes as well as listening to interview tapes again to hear intonation, emphasis and emotion, I have extrapolated unique themes for each participant. I have chosen to describe these themes through the use of individual case studies for each participant. This chapter is therefore divided into three sections- one section for each of the three study participants and their respective case studies.

This research study could be described as a painting- one similar perhaps to Andy Warhol's 1964/65 print "Twelve Electric Chairs" or more famous, his 1967 print "10 Marilyns." Similar to how each of the ten Marilyn prints can be separated and seen as art individually, so too can each of the three case studies be powerful and informative as a whole. Therefore, once having uncovered the unique nature of each woman's experiences, if one then permits the individuals to fade into the background what appears is a larger picture with an even more powerful and meaningful message. In this chapter I provide insight into the motherteachering lives of the three study participants by painting each woman's individual portrait through the use of case studies. Then, in chapter five, having already identified the unique nature of the experiences of each mother teacher, I then demonstrate how the similarities between the stories act as links; I draw upon

information from the individual cases to highlight understandings that can be garnered from the group as a whole.

It is these similarities that will guide us in furthering our understanding of the experiences of mothers and teachers in a more holistic manner, and most importantly, in a manner which has heretofore never been previously told.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT PATRICIA

Patricia is a thirty-one year old woman with shoulder-length blond hair that always appears slightly wind blown- as if she just came in from recess duty, or was just in the parking lot closing her car windows before an impending rainstorm. She is a casual dresser, preferring slacks to skirts, and jeans seemingly above all else. She tells me that she purposely choose to teach at the elementary level since, being as short as she is, at any other level she would be surely mistaken for a student. Patricia laughs: "In elementary school, some of the kids are still taller than I am! They look down to me: 'Yes, miss.' and 'Can I do this miss'" (I374, 378)?

On first glance Patricia is not a woman that stands out in a crowd. That is, until she smiles. Patricia has the most amazing smile – a smile that radiates love and happiness and the sensation that everything is just fine in the world. Patricia's attitude toward life is equally as vibrant as her smile. She is a very positive person; it was only in rare circumstances that I ever heard Patricia complain.

Patricia is a calm and collected person. She speaks clearly and succinctly, but in a quiet manner and always with ease. She takes her time, sometimes pausing to ponder her choice of words or glance into her listener's eyes. When we talk, she never looks at her watch nor do her eyes wander around the room. Instead, she seems to genuinely enjoy the time we spend together and gives the impression there is no place she would rather be than exactly where she is at the present moment.

Patricia did not take a direct road to the classroom. Although she grew up in a family of teachers, she never thought she would end up teaching. “I always helped my mom get her room ready every year. She was an elementary school teacher . . . We would play classroom when we were kids. We put together a fake roll and pretend to call out and do little lesson plans and write in the chalkboard . . . But that was about the extent of it. Maybe it didn’t seem exciting; I’m not sure” (I348-349, 353-354, 358, WC2). Although Pam parents are divorced and her father lives abroad, his influence on her has nevertheless been strong. “My father was in marketing . . . I was just fascinated” (I44). Therefore, while in college, Pam chose to follow in his footsteps by studying journalism with an emphasis in advertising. Unfortunately, Patricia’s chosen major did not work out well for her. She remembers how distraught she felt when, shortly before graduation, she realized that she had made a poor choice about her field of study.

> In fact, it wasn’t until the last semester, really toward the very end that I just KNEW. I was on this advertising team, we went national. The whole experience, while it was a lot of fun, I kept thinking, this is really not where I really want to be. There’s a lot of cut throat people in advertising and I had always just been kind of a nurturer . . . I guess more of a supportive person, nurturing my friends . . . encouraging them to go and find their dreams (I57-60, 74, 76).

As a result, she reports that she “floundered” for three years after graduation from college, working unfulfilling jobs in computer processing, marketing, and as a waitress (WC2). The last job she had before deciding to return to school was as an office manager for a small Portrait Design company that photographed doctors for directories. Having worked a similar job in marketing, my heart went out to Patricia as she explained the details of her job:

> So, part of my job, you’d say was marketing. It was horrible. It was calling them up at their home and saying ‘Your husband bought a portrait so because of that he won a free 8X10 of a family portrait in your home’ . . . That was the worst job ever- calling people in their homes trying to sell them something” (I262, 266-268).

Patricia continues: “My boss was like: “Stick with me babe, in five years you could be making $25,000 a year.’ I was like, oh great. I’m going nowhere” (I272-274). Her final awakening came when she and her husband began struggling to pay for medical bills as a result of his diabetes. “I married Emil and for our honeymoon we went to Mexico. We came back from our honeymoon and he got violently ill- luckily after we came back. He’s diabetic so we wound up in the hospital for the last part of our honeymoon . . . Our marriage was put to the test right away” (I325-329). Patricia remembers sitting down with her sister and looking through her insurance booklet: “We were looking at what insurance covered what and . . . that’s when my sister was like, ‘You’re not happy with what you’re doing- you should think about teaching’ ” (I333-334, WC2). It was at that moment that Patricia says she made the decision to follow in her aunt, mother, and sister’s footsteps and become a teacher. She recalls realizing that by tapping into her gift as a nurturer she could provide for a secure future for her and her husband. “I had to do something, do something with a career. None of my jobs felt very professional. You know, where teaching is a good professional job” (I386-387).

Patricia is an extremely committed person. Over the year and a half that the two of us communicated, she demonstrated time and time again amazing dedication and perseverance to achieve goals she set for herself. Once she made her decision to become a teacher, Patricia worked full time as a secretary for an engineering firm days while attending school at night in order to earn a Masters Degree in elementary education and certification to teach. “I just went full force into the University and went into their PUMA program which is for individuals that received a degree and want to become a teacher” (I395-396). Patricia explains that when she entered graduate school, she felt much more at ease with her fellow classmates than she ever had in college. When I asked her why she felt this way she responded: “I guess people who go into teaching and know they

want to do it are just totally different than the people who want to go into advertising. In advertising it was more like who could say the cleverest thing next . . . It was egos. Huge, huge egos" (WC3).

Patricia's dedication to her goal of becoming a teacher is admirable. She explains: "It was a long program. I went to school for about three years while I was working . . . It would have taken a year and a half if I didn't work full time" (I396-397, 424-425). Patricia says that the engineering firm for whom she was working was very supportive of her goal: "They knew when they hired me that I was going to school at night . . . If things were slow around the office I knew that was time that if I needed to work on my schoolwork or study, I could" (I457-458, 460-461). Patricia laughs and assures me she didn't waste her time: "I can format documents and I can type the neatest letter possible" (I467). Although she initially struggled trying to figuring out what to do with her life, once she decided to become a teacher, her life was given purpose. "When I tell them I'm a teacher now, it means something. I feel like I'm a teacher. Not like just a teacher. It's: 'I'm a TEACHER'" (I387-389).

When we first met, Patricia had been teaching at the elementary level for four years. She first began teaching just prior to graduating from her Master's program when she accepted a second grade classroom teacher position in a new inner city school. Although she has worked at two different schools, her entire career has been under the tutelage of Principal Smith. She explains that her first few years in the classroom were not easy. "I know my biggest weakness was classroom management . . . I was frustrated because I felt like 45% of my time and effort in the classroom if not more went to classroom management" (I858-859, 810-811). To counteract this weakness Patricia did her utmost to be prepared for each and every day. "I would be there every morning at 6:30 a.m. trying to prepare for my day. And I wouldn't leave until they would kick me

out . . .” (I823-824). Despite her ongoing struggles, Patricia remained positive: “I tried just about everything. Everything new that everybody could teach me. I went classes. I needed to figure out how to get my class under control” (I904-906, WC2).

Patricia explains that although she was disheartened, she did not give up and began working in tandem planning lessons and seeking advice from the other second grade teacher at her school. Patricia relished the support this mentor provided. Still, Patricia remembers that first year “some nights I just went home crying” (WC1). Patricia’s husband encouraged her to get a job at a different school, but she didn’t want to give up: “He’d say, ‘Why don’t you get a job at another school?’ No, I knew I could do it at that school” (I803-804). Patricia’s perseverance paid off; two years later she was thrilled when Principal Smith asked if she would be interested in following her to a newly built school to take over a non-homeroom teaching position as the computer teacher.

Patricia’s interest in computers was began when she had taken over the responsibilities for maintaining her school’s website. When a volunteer was first sought for maintaining the school’s website, Patricia was surprised that there weren’t more people interested. Ever modest and thoughtful of others, Patricia explains how she handled the situation: “I said, ‘I’d love to do if nobody else wants to.’ So nobody else wanted to. And you know, it surprised me. I thought I’d have to fight to do it.” The following year she was rewarded for her willingness to take on the challenge. “So I made the transition from the second grade teacher to computer person” (I1263-1267).

Patricia is the type of teacher principals love. Not only does she love her job: “I love to work with the kids . . . I just love spending time with those students” (WC#1), but she also enthusiastically attends trainings. As a requirement for the newly awarded position, Patricia began attending computer trainings provided by the district in the evenings and on weekends. Even her pregnancy did not deter her from her new goal.

> Here to get into the CET – Campus Educational Technologist- program you had to have three years experience and I had just had that barely when I entered the program. It was not quite a year, a full, kind of a long semester of classes that I had to take. I was happy to do the classes . . . I missed only one class before I went into labor (I1247-1251).

Patricia has been married to Emil, her husband, for five years. They began dating shortly after she graduated from college and the two were married within eight months. "I met him in Houston. He went to Richards University his first semester and then since he's kind of a momma's boy and didn't like being that far away from home, so he went to U of P. here after that . . ." (I301-301). Patricia and her teacher sister Jenny were living together in a townhouse while she dated Emil. "In fact, Jenny got engaged two months after I did and then she got married two months before I did" (I316-317).

Patricia is the mother of a gorgeous blond-haired, big blue eyed son who turned one year old shortly before our last interview. Although I haven't met him in person, Patricia's e-mails with photos attached kept me up to date on his "firsts" - Kyle's first Halloween, his first joys at tearing the wrapping paper off of Christmas presents, his first shaky steps, his first birthday party- with, according to Patricia, lots of gifts that make noise.

Patricia's Themes

Patricia's life as a mother teacher is pleasing to her. "I love teaching the kids and it just works out really well to go home and nurture my son- that's just my personality. That's just how I am" (I540, WC#2). She enjoys the time she spends with her baby and is looking forward to having another child. "I would like to have another. I really enjoy being a mom. In my home we had two kids- me and my sister. I guess because of that I think two is a good number" (I2186-2187). Patricia explains that she does not feel the urge to stay home full time, nor does she struggle over her decision to work. She says, "I enjoy what I do. If given the choice, if I could be an at-home mother or work, I would

choose work" (I2162). Patricia's husband Emil does not share Patricia's view of her life as balanced. Instead, he sees her roles as mother and teacher in conflict with each other and resents the time that Patricia spends at work. Patricia sighs and comments: "He's not really happy about the time I put in at school. He thinks I should be home more with Kyle" (I2185-2186). The tension in Patricia's life between her happiness in how her life is running and Emil's problems with respect to how she balances her time at work and home was a recurring theme in communications with Patricia.

Regardless of her husband's opinion, Patricia enjoys her job very much and is pleased that she was selected by Principal Smith as their Campus Educational Technologist. "I love this job. It's just what I'm good at" (WC#2). Patricia believes that her job is easier than that of a classroom teacher. As a result, she tends to take on extra work at school. She wants to ensure that others do not resent her for having been given her job and also wants to convince Principal Smith that she is doing her best. "It just seems to me that I have to prove to Principal Smith and other teachers that I deserve this job and that I'm just as committed as they are to our school" (WC#4). Patricia sometimes struggles with knowing just how many additional responsibilities she should accept from Principal Smith to prove her dedication. "Sometimes it does seem like I'm asked to do an awful lot. But it's hard to say no - everyone has so much to do" (WC#2).

In the following two sections I will elaborate on two themes. I first discuss Patricia's relationship with her husband and his struggles with her over how she has chosen to integrate mothering and teaching in her life. I then turn my attention to Patricia's life at school and examine how her desire to prove herself worthy of her position influences her ability to balance responsibilities from work and home.

Patricia's Happiness and her Husband's Desire to Pull her Homeward

Initially, Patricia wasn't really sure she wanted to be a mother. She explains that she and Emil waited five years after getting married before they started talking about having a baby. "I was never the kind of person that knew that's all I wanted was children" (I1081-1082). But, in the end, she decided to go ahead and try. As with every other goal in her life, Patricia was committed to success: "Boy, once we decided, that's what I knew I wanted and I didn't want to wait and play any of the games. I got ovulation strips and everything" (I1091-1092). Looking back, Patricia is happy she opted for motherhood. Patricia shows me recent photo file of Kyle on her computer and comments softly: "He's tons of fun. I'm enjoying him so much" (I1555).

Patricia explains that from the beginning her husband has been more nervous and uptight about leaving their son in the care of others. When the nanny first began, Patricia's husband was uncomfortable with leaving the baby with a stranger. As a result, he worked from home for a while to make sure everything was okay. Patricia on the other hand, explains that she didn't have any doubts about returning to school. "You know, I feel good about working. I like what I'm doing. I don't worry about Kyle during the day and need to call. You know, I think about him a lot during the day, but I don't worry about him" (WC#2, I3788-3793) In fact, Patricia was very eager to return to the computer lab she had set up before her maternity leave began. "I just wanted to get things going so that I could come back and finish what I began. It was hard to leave unfinished like that . . . I was jealous of the substitute actually . . . I said, 'He's going to get to do all this stuff and who knows if he'll do any of it'" (WC#3, I307-309). Patricia's impression of motherhood as multi-faceted reflects Dinnerstein's view that such women tend to have less trouble with returning to work compared with women who view motherhood as a life-long job (1992).

Patricia admits that Emil has never been particularly understanding of her having to work long hours. Referring to her first year teaching, Patricia explains how: "My husband did have some problems with that because he never did see me. He's like 'Oh, the sun is up and I see you. What's wrong with this picture'" (I824-826)? Despite this, she was caught off guard when, upon the birth of their son, his expectations for her changed dramatically. In Patricia's case, the point of contention between her and her husband is not household chores and cleaning, since their nanny and weekly housekeeper take care of the majority of these, but rather the amount of time Patricia's husband feels she should be spending with their son. Patricia explains that ever since the birth of her son, Emil has been more demanding of her. "It's weird, he never used to tell me what to do; now he'll try all sorts of things to get me to be home more" (I2197-2198). Dinnerstein writes about how working women face a "delicate balancing act frequently limited by family hierarchies and institutional practices and family hierarchies frequently hostile to their success" (1992, p. 185). Patricia tells me that this sudden change surprised her since he never minded when she wasn't home while in graduate school. In fact, Patricia explains, it was a joke that the time she did spend at home she was asleep.

> . . . we were both young and so sometimes I'd come home and his friends and my friends, we were a closer group, but they'd be over . . . and it would be the joke, 'Pat is going to fall asleep on the couch' (I433-435)!

Although their nanny receives the same salary whether Patricia comes home early or not, Emil particularly resents the time that Patricia spends working after school. Patricia has been confused about him harboring such strong feelings against her putting in time at school beyond what she is required by her contract. She explains: "If he had a say I'd be coming home everyday at 3:30 p.m." - the release time indicated in her contract. Patricia firmly believes that the time she puts in beyond her contract hours- both before and after school- is time which she needs to devote to school in order to do a good

job. Patricia sighs: “he doesn’t understand it when I need to come to school early or stay later or anything . . .” (I2121-2122). She shakes her head and explains the reasoning for her frustration: “I make decent money now . . . it’s not minimum wage where it would make sense” (I2146-2147). Dinnerstein provides an explanation for the behavior of Patricia’s husband: “Because domestic life reverberates with a kind of gendered emotional tone . . . efforts to change this can seem like an assault on the family, on love, and on female and male identity” (1992, p. 122).

Patricia feels that she and her family will be fine if she works full time and leaves her son in the care of their nanny. She doesn’t sense that the nanny threatens her role as mother. Talking about the nanny, Patricia explains:

> She’s real calm and she’s real good with Kyle. She just loves him. . . But, he doesn’t cry when she leaves . . . When I get home and he sees me I can tell he’s really happy. That makes me feel so good. It’s working out fine with teaching and him being with the nanny. Sometimes he stays a bit longer with her if I work late, it’s not a big deal (WC#1).

Emil’s expectations though, do not mesh with Patricia’s. Unfortunately, Patricia’s husband Emil isn’t as confident in her ability to balance her responsibilities of mother teaching. “He just doesn’t understand that I need both. It’s just not enough to mother and teaching isn’t just a job” (WC#4).

According to Patricia, in her husband’s eyes family should “definitely” come before work. Although Patricia agrees with him, she admits that her division isn’t as absolute as that of her husband’s. She says that compared with her husband, in her mind “Family comes before work, but to a lesser degree” (I1647).

Emil not only expects Patricia to spend time with their son, but he also expects that she spend more time with Kyle than he does. This expectation is something that aggravates Patricia. Patricia comments that during the week she gets up early and leaves home around 6:30 a.m. while her husband sleeps in and leaves for work later. Patricia

explains that to make up for this Emil thinks she should get home early in the afternoons to spend time with their son before he gets home from work around 6 or 7 p.m.. Patricia says that this really doesn't make any sense though. "I guess he thinks that that morning time counts as time he is spending with Kyle, but really, Kyle sleeps sometimes until the nanny arrives, so how much responsibility is that anyways" (I2177-2180)? Although certainly unfair, Emil's expectation that Patricia spend more time with their son is certainly not uncommon in today's society. Bittman and Pixley in their book, *The Double Life of the Family* write: "When it comes to child care, wives typically contribute five times more than their husbands do (1997, p. 91).

Another related issue that Patricia has struggled with has been Emil's expectation that she is completely responsible for their son on weekends. She complains that her husband assumes that she will be caring for Kyle unless she has spoken with him and asked if he can he watch their son. "It's assumed that when I leave the house, I take him with me . . . If I don't ask, he gets mad at me" (I2233, 2205). She shakes her head and gives an example:

> I probably spend more time with Kyle. Sometimes when I do, like he wants to go golfing, he's pretty much gone all day. Saturday mornings, when I go to get coffee, I take Kyle so he can sleep late. Every once in a while, I'll need him to stay home with Kyle, you know" (I2199-2201).

She mentions that sometimes she will forget to ask Emil if he can watch Kyle and he gets mad at her and says, "You didn't tell me. I didn't know that" (2210)! She says that she wishes that things were different: "I know. Take turns. Draw straws. Do something" (I2229).

Later, Patricia describes how her husband seeks to control her behavior if she doesn't concede to his demands. She and I are at a Girl's Night Out at a Pottery Studio; we sit chatting while painting our selected pieces of pottery. While she is deciding which

colors to paint her piece of pottery- a turtle, which is her school's mascot, I remind her of my ongoing offer to pay for her babysitter's fees while we meet. Patricia shakes her head no and explains that her husband is watching their son, but then pauses, rolls her eyes and adds that she could not overhear his parting comment on her way out: "You owe me" (I2882)!

Emil, Patricia explains, has recently begun resorting to using guilt to convince her to spend more time with their son. According to Patricia, he often feels compelled to remind her that she needs to be "here with your son" (I2136). When I ask how she feels about him telling her that she owes him when he watches his son, Patricia reveals the depth of her emotions as she responds: "It makes me feel angry and guilty . . . You know if he has to go to work on a Saturday. I never say, 'You really need to be here with your son.' I get awfully frustrated sometimes'" (I2147, I2135-2137). Patricia groans and rolls her eyes again: "And then when I work late, I get a guilt trip" (I2239). When I ask how she responds to him, Patricia shares that she tells him how she feels. "I tell him, 'You're giving me a guilt trip and I don't appreciate it'" (2239-2240). What Patricia is experiencing is not an uncommon phenomena for working mothers. According to Wearing, society may "allow" mothers to work, but the assumption is that they remain responsible for the children (cited in McMahon, 1995, p. 233).

Patricia's professional life has been greatly affected by her husband's impression of appropriate behavior for her as a mother. In her research with mother teachers, Collins discovered that motherhood defined and shaped all aspects of women's lives- including decisions about their professional lives. "They made career decisions, for example not to advance their careers or when best to undertake further studies, based on the needs of their children" (1994, p. 96). Patricia though, appears to have made career sacrifices based not upon her own perception of the needs of her child, but rather upon the

expectations her husband has for her as a mother. For example, Patricia is very interested in working as an administrator or teacher trainer. She often speaks about this ambition to me and therefore surprised me when she shared that she recently was offered a position as a teacher trainer in the district's Technology Department, but turned it down because she knew that her husband wouldn't approve of her being away from their son in the summers. Patricia shrugs, "I didn't do it because it would have been a 12 month position" (I3934).

At our next meeting Patricia casually mentions that she has another teacher training job offer on the table but, I suspect that she hasn't even discussed the opportunity with her husband. Patricia tells me that her hesitation is that this position, although good in that it is only a ten month contract, is bad in that it involves training teachers on Saturdays. She says: "They say if you work a Saturday, you take off another day. But I wonder if they actually do that, or if it would be one of those jobs where I'd be working longer hours" (3953-3955). When asked whether her husband would conceivably be willing to watch their son if she worked Saturdays, she sighs and shakes her head no: "He'd fuss about it. He wouldn't be happy" (I3965). Research demonstrates that, much like Patricia's experience indicates, married women often needed to do "emotional gymnastics" in order to reconcile relations with their spouse with their own aspirations (Dinnerstein, 1992, p. 9).

Interestingly, Patricia and her husband disagree on whether they should have another child. Patricia explains that she has begun thinking about having another baby, but her husband isn't convinced it's a good idea. "He's not sure he wants to have any more" (I2752). When I ask Patricia why she would like another baby she responds: "I think I'd like another baby. Yeah. I would like two . . . That's my idea of family. I'd just

love to have one more, but I think it's going to be a couple of years before I convince Elvis" (I2760, WC #3).

Patricia's desire to have another baby demonstrates how confident she is that she can be a good mother while working full time. Patricia's main struggle is dealing with her husband's expectations for her as a mom- expectations which, in Patricia's eyes, are inconsistent with her ability to be a good teacher.

Patricia's Relationship with her Principal

Due in large part I suspect to her struggles with classroom management her first few years of teaching, Patricia is very appreciative of Principal Smith for selecting her to fill the position of Campus Educational Technologist at her school. "I love being the CET. I enjoy setting up the computers and learning the software and teaching the teachers and students how to use them" (I2057-2059). Although she still teaches students, they are usually in small groups or larger groups with their classroom teachers present and, as a result, she no longer struggles with classroom management issues. "It's not that I don't still work with students- I do all the time . . . But this way it's more controlled. I almost never have discipline problems. I'm sure I've gotten more skills too" (WC#2, I2066-2067). As a result of her appreciation toward Principal Smith for having assigned her this teaching position, Patricia feels indebted to her and, since she would prefer not to be placed back in the classroom, wants to help ensure that Principal Smith wouldn't replace her as the CET.

> I don't think that will be the case as long as we have this principal here. But then I'd just have to go back into the classroom. No, I wouldn't be happy. So, I don't owe her or anything, but I want to show her that she made a good decision. Plus, I'd rather not go back in the classroom. I mean, if I have to okay, but I'd rather not (I2074-2077).

Since Patricia is under the impression that her job is easier than that of classroom teachers, she often feels guilty for sensing that she doesn't work as hard as they do. "I take on extra stuff and try to always be available to the teachers because I know how hard it is to be in the classroom and I want to be a resource for them, not make their job even more difficult" (I1789-1791). Patricia is mindful of wanting to avoid talk from other teachers who might resent her for having a job with more flexibility. As a result, Patricia explains how she tries to make sure she doesn't take advantage of the flexibility her job offers:

> I try to keep my lunch time like around theirs and they only . . . have a 35 minute lunch and so I keep it with that. But I'm lucky, if I want to go out and go to Luther's Barbeque or pick up something from Piccadilly cafeteria, I can do that . . . You know for the most part, nobody ever questions it. But I feel, there's a lot of guilt there (I1946-1950).

Insisting that she wants others to know that she is equally committed to teaching as they are, she says that she is willing to do whatever she needs to convince them. "The last thing I want to give these teachers is the impression that I'm not here for them. So I say, 'Whatever is best for you, I'll do it'" (I1788-1790). Patricia explains that she wants to be a "visible presence" at school and to do this she has to be available for the teachers whenever they need her. She seeks to accomplish this by making every effort to have other teachers see her putting in as much face time as possible at school. Therefore, despite looking forward to being home with her son in the evenings, Patricia's joy at leaving school on time is often tarnished by feelings of guilt. She tells me that she looks forward to seeing Kyle in the evenings: "the ride home is the best, because I know I can go see him" (I1891). However, even when she waits to leave until most teachers have already left, she still feels guilty about leaving school. "I feel a little, yeah, I do. I feel like if nothing else, I need to be seen here at school" (I1842).

Patricia explains that she always tries to always be open to additional duties. She comments: “I have certain things under the SIP that I am responsible for . . . and there are additional duties that I am assigned to” (I1374, 1387). Although these additional responsibilities are outside of her contract duties, Patricia claims that she doesn’t really mind the extra work. She shrugs and says: “it’s worked out fine. I really don’t mind” (I1797). When I ask for her to give me an example of some of the additional responsibilities she is given, Patricia shares that she recently was very aggravated with Principal Smith.

> . . . one of our first grade teachers left unexpectedly . . . Instead of our principal hiring a new teacher, she just moved one of the ancillary teachers. . . . I do the schedules and everything. That’s why I was so upset about it. I knew that changing the schedules without that teacher wasn’t possible . . . (I3042, 3221-3222, 3042).

Patricia explains that the only solution to the problem has been for the teachers to take on additional responsibilities. “ . . . all the support staff including me are helping fill that slot. So in addition to being the computer teacher, I teach a different second grade class every day (I3041-3050).

Since it is in the middle of the school year, I ask Patricia when this extra assignment began and how long she suspects it will last. Patricia thinks for a moment: “This last week, it just started this last Monday. And I was actually gone that first Monday helping the music teacher. She had taken a class- one of her singing groups- to a nursing home and needed another chaperone . . .” (I3063-3065). Patricia tells me that she will probably keep the additional responsibilities for the rest of the school year: “Right now we’re on a hiring freeze . . . I’ll just have to do more of my computer job after school” (I3061, 3083). Patricia claims that she doesn’t mind the extra work. “I don’t really mind. No teacher here ends their day really at 3:30 p.m.” (I1797-1798). She pauses:

> I mean, they have papers to grade. They're taking stuff home. And a lot of them are good about that, taking it and doing it at home. But some of them stay here . . . these teachers work hard (I1802-1814).

Patricia believes that she often gets put in charge of things because she doesn't have a group of students of her own:

> For example, I knew I was going to be in charge of the digital publishing fair coming up in the spring . . . but I didn't know about the history fair . . . That wasn't something I was expecting . . . The librarian has the option first of doing it, but this year she turned it down. It was kind of given to me like, "You're going to do it this year" (I2567-2573, 2555, 2561).

She pauses then shrugs: "But it was a good experience . . . except that I thought that I had prepared the teachers, but they really hadn't done a whole lot . . ." (I2561, 2524-2525). This is an example of how Patricia's job description as Campus CET has her acting in an advisory role vis a vis the teachers, yet Principal Smith often asks her to fill more of a supervisory role. This has been something with which Patricia has struggled: "Well, unfortunately that was my problem. I didn't want it to be that way. You know, making sure the teachers were doing everything. I didn't" (I2602-2603). Referring to Principal Smith, Patricia elaborates: "She's asked me to. And I don't want to be that way with the teachers. I want to make sure they know that I'm a resource" (2618-2619).

When I ask Patricia how being responsible for things outside of her job description affect how well she can do her job, she responds: "I've been very concerned about that." She sighs:

> But you just have to refocus and regroup . . . I'm here for technology. That's what I have to refocus on because I'm also always what the school need me to be, wants me to do. But at the same time, I need to make sure that I'm doing the things indicated in my job description (I3144-3153).

Liebermann and Miller, as previously quoted, write about how teachers who have a good relationship with the principal tend to gain access to the wealth of privileges held by the principal (1992). This certainly was the case for Patricia. Her willingness to accept

assignments and duties far beyond those required of her in her contract has helped solidify her relationship with her supervisor and she benefited in a multitude of ways. Connell describes this political order of a school as: "the pattern of authority and consent, alliance and cooperation, resistance and opposition, that characterizes the institution as a whole" (1985, p. 131). This political order of "alliance and cooperation" has proven very beneficial for Patricia.

Over time, Patricia's Pollyanna nature toward school became difficult for me to believe. In my journal I wrote: "Surely no one can be as happy as she is about things that happen at a school all the time. It's an inner city school- where are her challenges, her struggles? What is she trying to hide- or does she really believe that everything is as perfect as she makes it out to be?" As a result, I could hardly refrain from hugging her in relief when she admitted to having thoughts more negative in nature about some of her experiences at school and when she indicated that she sometimes thought about resisting being compelled to conform. She tells me that she recently was aggravated with Principal Smith for making her re-do the master schedule multiple times within a short period of time.

> With this latest schedule change, I mean I'm not dealing with this well . . . sometimes I just feel like, what is the point? . . . You know, I really love my principal. But sometimes I just get so frustrated . . . It took me hours to reschedule everything for this month. That's the fourth time I've changed the schedule this year . . . (I3820, 3848, 3852-3857, 3017, 3862).

Patricia looks around:

> Then, a week later, the principal changes it again without telling me . . . I just got very frustrated . . . I didn't handle it well. In fact, I was almost a zombie that day . . . I was just very upset about having redone the whole schedule once again for nothing . . . I was not handling changing well that day. It was because it was too much. Too much change, too quickly. Our schedules keep changing until it was very, very frustrating (3107-1308, 3181-3182, 3186-1387, 3228-3229)

When I ask Patricia how she normally deals with change she stiffened and her voice rose slightly: “I do VERY well with change. I handle change all the time. But that was like too much. That was the straw that broke the camel’s back” (I3238-3239).

Another time Patricia mentioned something more negative in nature when she explained that these extra responsibilities take time away from time that she could be spending at home. “Again, I don’t like to ever say no, but I do need to get home before the nanny leaves and sometimes it’s nice to get home early” (I1759-1760). Patricia tells me about how hard some of the teachers work at her school but pauses, and then, laughing nervously, shrugs her shoulders and mentions that the teachers putting in that time don’t actually have little kids at home. She takes a breath and then continues, explaining how although she feels torn between school and home, the pull is stronger toward school: “I feel like I still need to be here . . .” (I1832).

Patricia’s sense of what realistically should be expected of her at school seems to go far beyond what is routinely expected of teachers, and I suspect that the guilt she feels about the flexibility in her job, as well as her feelings of indebtedness towards Principal Smith have formed this jaded set of expectations she holds for herself.

Conclusion for Patricia’s Case Study

Patricia is frustrated for not being able to make the choices that she feels are best. In her book, misconceptions, Naomi Wolf discusses the “all or nothing” approach that society offers to mothers. She quotes Kahn who writes:

> The job market holds an all-or-nothing prospect to new mothers; you can give your body and your heart and lose much of your status, your money, your equality in your marriage; or you can keep your identity and your income- only if you abandon your baby all day long . . . (2001, p. 225).

It is easy to understand Patricia’s frustrations. She is faced with juggling competing expectations for her as a mother from her husband and additional demands

from Principal Smith. Being pulled in opposite directions from two important arena of one's life is an unpleasant burden to bear. In Hard Choices (1985), Gerson focuses upon how women are forced to choose between work and home (cited in Garey, 1999, p. 9)." She writes: "Employed mothers, by virtue of having to choose, are thus divided in areas that are 'separate and oppositional'" (cited in Garey, 1999, p. 7). What a sad story Patricia shares with us about our society. Even when the mother teacher herself does not feel that working is in conflict with being a good mother, she is forced by our patriarchal society into choosing between the two. Either she can be seen as a bad mother for dedicating more time to her students at school, or she can be considered a bad teacher for dedicating more time to her children at home.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT KENDRA

The first time I saw Kendra I was sitting in an uncomfortable chair in her school's main office waiting for our meeting. Since I had only communicated with her up until that day via e-mail and phone, I had no idea what to expect. While I sat waiting, I began to look around. The school is housed in a beautiful new building with many windows in lieu of walls and the walls that I did see were adorned with children's artwork. As I looked around, I realized that looking through a wall of windows just beyond the main office I could into the teacher's work area. Since I had arrived on campus soon after school was released, there were many teachers milling about preparing for the next day's lessons. In the mass of teachers filling the work area one woman in particular caught my eye. She was a strikingly dressed woman in a jeans skirt and fitted top that contrasted beautifully with her copper colored skin and shiny black hair cut neatly at her shoulders.

Despite standing out from the other women because of her stylish manner of dressing, this woman attracted my attention because of the manner in which she moved her slender figure with speed and agility through the crowded teachers' lounge. She

wasn't talking with the other teachers around the laminating machine, nor did she stop to chat with any of the numerous groups of teachers standing around. I did not have the impression that she meant to be rude or condescending, but rather it was almost as if she didn't see them. It was as if she were focused on something beyond the physical limitations of the lounge. As she left the workroom I saw her glide down the hall toward the classrooms with a large stack of papers in her arms and a demeanor of someone who had many places to go and many important people to see. Reading through my journal, I recall writing the following words after leaving the school that day.

> I saw Kendra for the first time today. I saw her before she saw me. I don't know how I knew it was her. I didn't know she was African American. I didn't know she was beautiful. All I knew is that the woman I had spoken with on the telephone sounded like a woman who knew how important her job was, and took it very seriously. The woman I saw in that lounge today certainly fit that image.

I didn't have to wait long to learn a lot more about Kendra. Just a few minutes after I saw her walk down the hall toward the classrooms, she returns again, scurrying toward the office. She pulls open the office door and all the eyes turn to look at her. Either she is used to the attention, or perhaps she simply doesn't notice, but she fixes her eyes on me and rushes forward right hand extended to shake. As we leave the office together, I can't help but feel that I somehow I am lucky. Kendra is simply one of the special people in this world that can be dressed in ripped jeans and a stained t-shirt, doing nothing in particular, but will still stand out as different from the rest of us, we just aren't quite sure why.

Kendra had been teaching in bilingual classrooms at the elementary level for seven years when we first met. Kendra draws attention for her looks and confidence, not because of a bubbling personality. No matter what Kendra is doing, whether in the classroom or at home, she gives the distinct impression that she means business. Kendra lives her life in a conscientious manner- she has specific goals for all aspects of her life

and her days consist of smaller steps which move her in the direction of reaching these goals. As example, one need look only as to how she ended up in the classroom.

Although her grandmother had been a teacher, Kendra had not thought that teaching was something she was called to do. It was not until she had had the opportunity to work with small groups of children doing volunteer work at the private Christian University she attended that she noticed to her surprise, that she really enjoyed being around them. “I just kind of started working with kids . . . It just kind of happened that way and then I realized, ‘I really am enjoying this’” (I44, 46). When she enrolled in Spanish and realized how much she loved the language, she began to think about how she might integrate her gift of foreign language with spending time with children. Although she wasn’t aware of the dire need for bilingual teachers, Kendra decided on her future career. “I wanted to teach children who didn’t yet speak English” (I47). To this end, she opted to major in Spanish and minor in Child and Family Studies. Kendra purposely did not choose to major in education. “I knew I wanted to teach children who didn’t speak English, and if I had concentrated on education, with a specialization in Spanish or something like that, I wouldn’t know enough Spanish to communicate all day like I do now. So that helped me make my decision- I majored in Spanish, I minored in Child and Family . . . so there was my early childhood right there. It worked out really well” (I75-81).

Looking back, she explains that she loved her coursework and was pleased about her decision: “I enjoyed my coursework immensely and the more I got into it, the more I felt like- this was my niche” (I81-82). Upon early graduation from college, Kendra accepted a position as a long-term substitute mid-year in a bilingual kindergarten classroom. A few months into her substitute teaching Kendra applied, and was accepted, into the school district’s Alternative Certification Program for teachers. Since then,

Kendra has never been at a loss for a teaching position. She is a confident woman and knows that she is a worthwhile candidate for any school:

> I'm not bragging, but you know when you're a quality candidate and when you're not. No one has ever postponed an interview with me. I've had principals phone interview me, do all kinds of things, 'I don't want to let you go.' When I went to Walker I.S.D. I had ten offers. It just feels good (I847-850).

Kendra shares that she enjoys a traditional conservative marriage. Kendra explains that she and her husband believe that "God set it up a certain way. The man is the head, the woman is the help and that's how our house functions" (I2852-2853). Kendra goes on to explain that her husband neither dominates nor lords over her, but rather that "final decisions are his. He listens to my input and sometimes I'm right and sometimes he's right. It just depends on who has the best idea and we talk about everything, but ultimately the decisions are his" (I2852-2856). Kendra's husband Kamil is employed as an assistant college football coach at a local college in the city where they live. He also spends a lot of time on his duties as assistant pastor at their church. Although she did not discuss the importance of religious beliefs in her own life, she mentions that she is more conservative than other women she knows. "I'm very, I guess, traditional in my role as a mom and a wife and all that" (I2847-2848). In Kendra's home, she is responsible for house and children and her husband is responsible for earning the money. Kendra is appreciative that she doesn't have to deal with financial matters:

> I feel extremely liberated . . . You know, the pressure is on him. Let him have it. Let him run the house . . . A lot of women would have a problem with that. They don't have control over the money any more. But I'm thrilled I don't have to deal with it. I don't need to know how much the light bill is. I really don't care (I2856-2857, 2878-2879).

Although she admits that they occasionally have discussions regarding the division of labor in the household, basically she takes "care of inside and he takes care of outside" (WC#3). When I ask Kendra to describe the work her husband does with the

home and kids Kendra replies: “He just doesn’t like housework . . . He just doesn’t want to cook or clean . . .” (I1693, 1701). She pauses, then in what I suspect is in defense of her husband, emphasizes: “But he is starting to help out more” (I1669). Although I do not share this with Kendra, the words “help out” in reference to men caring for their own children and housework in their own homes is particularly irksome to me. Dinnerstein addresses this phenomena of men “helping” their wives. Since husbands are defined by society as providers, they are “seen and could think of themselves as helpers rather than as equal sharers in domestic activity, which were not their ‘real’ work” (1992, p. 121). Although one might think that the inequities so very apparent in Kendra’s household might cause her pause, Kendra either doesn’t seem to notice, or is unwilling to honestly admit having done so.

Kendra takes her jobs as teacher and wife/mother very seriously- so seriously at times that I was given the impression that she perceives these responsibilities almost as burdens rather than joys in her life. Kendra’s dedication to specific goals she sets for herself seems to have a direct impact on how she relates to people, her children included. Kendra has two beautiful daughters. They are always well dressed and their hair is neat and tidy. To Kendra’s chagrin, their behavior does not always match their cute outfits. As any mother certainly does, Kendra struggles with having her children live up to the behavioral expectations she sets for them.

> The five-year old is picking on the two-year old now. They used to play so well together and now she just wants to bother her all day . . . The little one is very feisty and the older one is, now, she can be a little bossy, but the little on is like, ‘you’re not gonna boss me around’ so she’ll hit. The baby hits the big one. She can pack quite a punch, so she usually sends her sister crying (I3830-3831, 3840-3842).

Kendra is a wonderful speaker. Although she has a tendency to speak very quickly, she communicates clearly and concisely. However, she often seems anxious, as

if her mind is not completely concentrating on the conversation. Her hands are constantly in motion, rustling through papers or organizing pens, even when she is seated and supposedly taking a break. Even during summer vacation when we met at the pool with her three and five-year-old daughters, Kendra seems preoccupied. When we finish our interview, she prefers watching the children from a lounge chair and talking to me from the side of the pool rather than joining her kids and me in the pool. No one could ever accuse Kendra of not being a dedicated teacher or mother, it is just appears that she is so very preoccupied with the responsibilities of these jobs that she is unable to just relax and enjoy life.

Kendra's Themes

In reviewing transcripts of our conversations as well as written communication from Kendra, two themes stand out as particularly significant. The first theme is that the manner in which Kendra's home life is constructed seems to act as a catalyst for Kendra's guilty feelings. The other theme which emerged from our conversations is Kendra's dedication to her supervisors and commitment to her school for which she is rewarded toward the later part of our interviews.

In this section I will first discuss Kendra's feelings of guilt with respect to being a working mother and how she believes her choices have affected her children. I then examine Kendra's relationship with, and commitment to, Principal Smith and the impact this appears to have on her home and school lives.

Guilt Kendra Feels about Mothering and Teaching

Time and time again, Kendra's words demonstrate how she is wholeheartedly seeking a balance between working outside of the home and being the mother she feels she ought to be. Whenever Kendra speaks about her experiences leaving her daughters in

the care of other women Kendra's body language, words and voice tone reveal the depth of her emotions. For example, when I ask what it felt like leaving her baby to return to the classroom she takes a deep breath and the floodgates open. She throws her hands up in the air and exclaims: "Awful!" She goes on to explain that although her husband's grandmother was watching the baby and she knew that the baby was being well cared for, she felt guilty and jealous. "I knew she was being showered with love and attention all day long. But then, I was like, 'I want to do that'" (I342-344). But in typical Kendra fashion, she sighs and continues: "It just didn't work out that way. And you know, I got over it" (I344). In our online journal I ask Kendra to expand on her feelings. She writes: "I still do feel guilty, but it's not as bad. If I didn't come to terms with that I would have never been able to stay at work. I mean, otherwise I would have been a basket case all day" (WC#2).

Kendra's life became more complicated when her daughter began crawling. Since Kendra's great-grandmother was in a wheelchair, the baby had to be moved to a day care. Kendra looks sad and sighs: "When she started day care, she started getting ear infections. She had eleven ear infections in twelve months" (I456-457). Kendra describes how she felt guilty and believed that the ear infections were her fault for putting her child in day care. She also didn't like having to bring her daughter so early in the morning and pick her up so late, but because Kendra's school was far from the daycare, she had no choice. Wistfully, Kendra refers to her daughter as the daycare's "welcoming committee" (I589-590). Kendra explains: "Cassie would get there about 6:40. And usually she was the first one there. And so that's why I'd call her the welcome committee. Because she was there when everybody else came" (1348-1349). Kendra thinks for a moment before continuing. "You know, she got good quality time. It was the daycare director's mother,

and she was a grandma and everyone just loved her. But still . . .” (I1353-1354). She sighs: “That made me sad . . . And it got old really quickly” (I1349, 447).

With Kendra’s second summer baby, Kendra explains that she felt even worse since she had to leave her baby at daycare as soon as her maternity leave ended. Since Kendra’s great grandmother was not able care for this infant at all Kendra had no choice but to leave her newborn baby in daycare. Just as Kendra’s other daughter, the baby had no problem with being left: “At six weeks, they don’t care. As long as someone is feeding them, changing them- they don’t care” (I726-727). Kendra, however, struggled with her decision and worried that she was a bad mom. “I was leaving her with strangers. They weren’t family. . . That was horrible. I would cry” (I739, 726). Kendra felt even worse when, just like her older sister had, once the baby started attending daycare she immediately began getting ear infections and tubes were put in when she was only eleven months old.

Kendra explains that she has always considered teaching a good job for a mother: “I’m a family person and teaching is conducive to that” (WC#1). Kendra describes how on September 11th after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, she immediately drove over to her daughter’s day care: “I drove over to my daughter’s day care and brought her right back with me. There aren’t many jobs where you could do that” (I1338-1339). Despite believing that she has chosen to work in a family friendly profession, Kendra still struggles with fulfilling her responsibilities as teacher and those as a mom. “It’s not easy sometimes. I have 22 little bodies that demand so much of me. Then I get home and there are two more little bodies to deal with and I’m tired and grumpy, but what am I going to do? They’re my kids. They deserve a good mom” (WC#3).

The first time we first met, Kendra was teaching kindergarten and appeared very calm and collected. The following school year we talk again and Kendra is visibly

anxious. Principal Smith had asked her to move up a level to first grade and Kendra explains that she is feeling the pressure of not having enough time. Here she describes the frustration she feels since having moved grade levels.

> This year I've felt so overwhelmed with stuff to do . . . planning for centers, doing lesson plans, grading all the papers, doing all the parent conferences, making all those parent contacts . . . it's just worn on me . . . This year, I just can't seem to get it all done and I think it's because I'm grading papers again. 'Cause when I had kindergarten I didn't have to grade papers . . . but now I've got six subjects or seven subjects and I've got to get eighteen grades per subject per grading period . . . It's required and it's an extreme amount of grading . . . (I3242, WC#2, 1116-1117, 1118-1120).

Kendra has been unable to complete her work at school before needing to pick up her daughters from day care and, as a result, is having to take work home. Although I certainly do not think that I looked distraught at the fact that she is having to take work home, Kendra seems preoccupied with guilt and rushes to assure me that she is frustrated by the situation but that it has not impacted her ability to be a good mother. "I end up taking things home, but I do it after they go to bed. They go to bed at 7 and 8 o'clock. So I don't grade while they're awake" (I1124-1125). When I ask how taking work home affects her, Kendra explains that she is a little frustrated because she had stopped taking work home last year when she realized that "that's our family time" (I352). This year though she simply doesn't have a choice. However, although she'd prefer not to take work home at all, she shares that being able to wait until the kids are in bed to start in on it makes her feel like she's still being a good mom.

Although she only occasionally shows it, Kendra seems resentful of teachers without families judging her and her actions at school. Once I asked Kendra to tell more about the coping strategies she uses for getting things done at school. She nods, glances at the door she always closes before she begins to talk and responds in a soft voice:

> I don't socialize at work a lot. I really don't. During my planning time, I'll pass by and the other teachers are huddled up talking and laughing but I'm headed over

> here ‘cause I’ve got something to do. After school same thing. They might be in another room talking and laughing and I’m over here doing my work ‘cause I’m ready to go home and I’m getting my things done. I’ve learned to be very efficient . . . I might have a lot to do, but it doesn’t take me a long time to get things done (I1134-1140).

Kendra mentions that she has heard some snide remarks from other teachers on her team about her being “snooty” and not wanting to mingle (I1541). She resents these comments: “I wasn’t being snooty; I was doing my work. ‘Do yours and you won’t be here ‘till 6 o’clock every night’” (I1142-1143). Kendra explains she thinks the big difference is that these teachers have no husband or kids to go home to so they can stay as late as they want. “No husbands, no kids. It’s a HUGE difference. They go home to their . . . CAT! It doesn’t matter at all. They don’t have to cook dinner. If they choose to fine, if they don’t, who cares? It’s just them” (I1147-1152). She shrugs her shoulders and explains what she would like to tell the teachers who accuse of her not being friendly: “If you have a problem with it, get a husband and some kids and see . . . I want to go home. I enjoy my family” (I1164-1167).

Kendra explains that ever since her oldest daughter was little her daughter has loved attending daycare “She loves it. Always has” (I523-525). Kendra laughs uneasily and tells a story about the first of several times when her daughter protested going home at the end of the day with her mother. “The first time, I said: ‘What do you mean you don’t want to come home?’” (I534-537). Kendra recalls looking at the teacher shocked: “Like, I’m looking at the teacher, thinking you don’t think I’m doing something to her, do you” (I534-535)? But her teacher thought the situation was funny. “She said: ‘Girl, you can’t stay with me’” (WC#2). But the child insisted: “But I don’t want to go home” (WC#2). When asked how this made her feel, Kendra shrugs and softly says: “She was having such a good time. It makes you feel good and bad. Good that I’m glad that she likes it this much, but bad because she’d rather Miss Marsha than me” (I534-535).

Kendra explains that how her daughter reacted actually makes sense: “They were attached . . . She had her all the time . . . I mean, this is the person she’s with all day long, so I can understand that . . . But I was hurt” (WC#2). Kendra’s experience with her daughter liking day care better than being home was not limited to her eldest daughter. Even Kendra’s youngest daughter has sometimes not wanted to leave daycare at the end of the day. Kendra has learned that even if she is able to pick her daughters up early from daycare, it is not a smart thing to do.

> I just don’t go before 4 o’clock . . . They have a set routine until 4 o’clock and then after that they’ll watch movies as everybody is trickling out . . . If I go in the middle of playtime, oh goodness, if I go and see them outside, I just leave. It’s no use. It’s a fight. They’re gonna cry, they’re gonna be just very unhappy. I might as well go do something for ten more minutes and come back (I1272-1274, 1265-1269).

Kendra doesn’t quite know how to deal with how much her children enjoy going to daycare each day. Kendra has admitted to not really wanting to stay home with them full time, but shares that she feels guilty for feeling this way. Kendra admits that the guilt comes from within herself. “It was me. No, it was all me” (I529). More specifically, Kendra feels guilty knowing that, just like Kendra herself would rather be teaching than home all day with her daughters, so too her kids prefer to attend day care rather than spend the day with their mother.

A few months before the end of the school year Kendra tells me that although she doesn’t have to work this summer, she is thinking about leaving the kids in daycare anyway. The daycare has a fun-filled schedule of field trips in the summer and although Kendra would like to take her daughters to the zoo and children’s museum etc. with just the three of them, she explains: “They’ll have more fun going with their classmates than they would have with just us going” (I3621-3623). Kendra comments: “And it hurts me to say that, but it’s true” (WC#3).

About a month into summer vacation we meet and Kendra explains that although she ultimately decided not to enroll her kids full time in day care this summer, in retrospect she regretted her decision.

> I think I work for my sanity. I always thought I'd like being a stay at home mom, but these last couple of weeks has made me doubt that. I'd always said, I'd be great at it. We'd go to museums, and I'd have the house all clean, but it does not work out that way. . . They'd rather be in school anyway. One day they went for drop in childcare and the next day was a field trip and she had a FIT that she wasn't going back the next day- and they were just going to McDonalds (I3940-3942, 3943-3945)!

Kendra is experiencing societal pressure that tells her that although a mom may need to work, she should really prefer to be at home with her kids, and that certainly her children should prefer to be with their mother in lieu of spending the day at child care. Kendra is looking forward to school starting up again in the fall: "This summer has been crazy for me. But I think once the fall starts I'll be back to doing what I do, what I do real well and we'll be fine" (I4155-4156).

A few months later Kendra is faced with another struggle. She believes that her working may be having a detrimental effect on her youngest daughter. Although her daughter loves daycare, after Kendra picks her up from daycare Kendra usually has to run an errand and then rush home to make dinner before she can settle down and give the kids her attention. Kendra explains that lately her daughter has been having meltdowns in the evening. Kendra explains she will rush into the house with the kids and that her toddler can't handle that stress.

> Sometimes I forget that she needs attention too. I'll come home . . . I've got to unload the groceries and I'm turning this on and doing the oven and whatever else and about thirty minutes into it, right in the middle of my cooking, she's pulling on me. She's mad, she's upset, she wants me to pick her up (I1210-1214).

Kendra's husband has told Kendra that she should just put the toddler in front of the television with her sister until Kendra has time to give her attention, but Kendra disagrees.

> That's where my guilt comes in . . . She doesn't want to be in there with her sister, she wants to be with me. She didn't ask for a mother that worked. That was something we did. She doesn't care what I'm doing or where I've been. She has not been with me all day and now she wants to be with me. And I've been away from her all day, the least I can do is give her that (I1218-1222).

Kendra almost seems to have an internal compass that warns her if she goes too far off track from what she considers appropriate behavior for a mother. She explains that in her life she knows she is going in the wrong direction when: "The mommy in me is saying, 'You can't do this'" (I555)! She uses this phrase to explain how she came to resign from an ideal teaching position. She was working in a suburban school and Kendra was required to participate in weekly after school classes offered by the school district. Because her daycare was so far away from the school where she taught, she was the first parent to drop her child off in the mornings at 6:40 a.m. and the last child to pick her up in the evenings at 6:30 p.m.. Kendra remembers how one time it was already dark when she pulled up at the daycare. She found her daughter sitting in the corner "with her arms folded and a mean look on her face 'cause she was upset. Really upset, bad" (I1309-1310). At that moment, putting herself in her daughter's shoes, Kendra realized: "It was too much for her" (WC#2). Kendra immediately decided that she needed to look for a teaching position closer to home so that her child would not be in the care of others for so long each day. She explains that although she loved her school and her position, it was not worth the pain she was putting her child through. Kendra remembers saying to herself:

> I'm passing up too many children to go and teach children. There's children everywhere and there's no need to drive across town to teach. It's not like a corporate job where it's hard to get a job. You can get a job teaching pretty much

> anywhere. As a bilingual teacher, I never had trouble getting a job. I've always had multiple offers (I1330-1337).

Kendra explains that is was difficult to leave her teaching position where she was enjoying the financial support that came with the school being linked with a corporate partner.

> I inherited a two thousand dollar classroom library that I got to pick. So I was ordering books, and ordering more books, and ordering more books. Each teacher had $500 to spend in the classroom- whatever you wanted. The principal never told me "no." On anything . . . I loved it (I244-248).

Nevertheless, Kendra resigned and returned to teach in the inner city to best meet the needs of her daughter. Although the inner city position she accepted was a far cry from where she had been teaching, she was only five minutes away from the childcare and three miles from home. Talking about the job she resigned from, Kendra says, "I know that I loved the school. I loved my colleagues, I loved my principals, I was in a wonderful situation, but the guilt I felt leaving her at day care that early and getting to her that late . . . I just said, 'She doesn't deserve this. . . I made the decision for my family, so I'm gonna' stick to it'" (WC#2, I517, 578).

Kendra's Relationship with Her Principals

Kendra is an extremely organized and dedicated person. She willingly accepts additional responsibilities given to her by her principals and is always very busy after school with tutoring, serving on various school committees and leading teacher training. "I am very involved at school. I serve on the S.B.D.M. team among others and am often pulled to do teacher training which I enjoy" (WC#1).

Kendra and her current principal, Principal Smith, also an African American woman, have a close relationship. "I get along well with my principal. I respect her and give my job my best and I feel like she returns my respect. She's a good leader" (WC#4).

Kendra recognizes that Principal Smith is in a powerful position and she sees the benefit of establishing a solid relationship with her. Ever since Kendra began teaching, she has always gone out of her way to give assistance to the school administrators when asked and, as a result, reports that she has always gotten along well with her principals. Kendra believes that it is important to do as much as she can to help Principal Smith. “I feel she values me and what I can provide to the school. It feels good knowing that you’re working for someone who knows your worth. I do my best to pitch in and be the team player she needs me to be” (WC#4). Although Kendra sometimes struggles with the expectations Principal Smith has for her and her fellow teachers, she has learned that it is best to be silent. “Sometimes, it does seem like I’m asked to do an awful lot. I don’t complain, but this year I’ve really struggled and it’s hard not to chime in when you hear the other teachers in their complaining sessions” (WC#2).

Kendra says that she is particularly thankful that she has a supportive principal because she has worked in a school where the principal was not supportive of the personal lives of teachers and she knows how miserable it can be. She explains that she once had an administrator who was not understanding about teachers needing to blend the responsibilities of work and home life in some type of compromise. This principal was unmarried, did not have any children and was known for making snide remarks about teachers who did not completely dedicate their lives to their school. Kendra says that this principal would tell the teachers: “Well those of us who are more dedicated and stay here and do things la la la. So all of you, you know, you leave at 3:30 and well, that’s your contract . . .” (I2756-2757). This principal’s expectation was that teachers should work into the evenings and on weekends. Kendra completely disagreed with this and did not appreciate being made to feel guilty when she refused. Kendra demonstrated a willingness to resist being treated in a manner which she considers unfair. Referring to

her former supervisor, Kendra comments: “She just didn’t understand that I won’t do Saturday tutorials. ‘You know, we all need to share the work’ she’d say. Well, I am. I have my own kids at home. I’m not giving up 9 to 1 on Saturdays. That’s only four hours, but THAT’S 4 HOURS! (I2765-2774)

Because of this experience Kendra is especially appreciative of being employed at a school where the principal shows compassion and caring toward her faculty. Speaking about Principal Smith she writes: “I think our principal really cares. I know that if I need anything from her, I can go in and talk to her about it” (WC#1). Kendra also had a good relationship with a different principal when she first began teaching. She recalls during her pregnancy feeling very, very tired teaching two sets of 21 children for half-day kindergarten, and how appreciative she was of the administrator being so understanding about her struggles.

> I was extremely emotional. This one day I just cried, and cried and cried. And I went to the principal and she said, ‘Kendra, what’s wrong?’ And I couldn’t even talk. I started crying again. She said: ‘Go home honey. I’ve been there. Don’t worry about your kids. Get your purse and get out of here’ (I2818-2824).

What principals show toward Kendra in sensitivity, Kendra tries to return multiplied. Throughout our conversations Kendra demonstrates how committed she is to her principals. For example, ever organized and aware how her actions might impact others, Kendra was successful in planning both of her pregnancies to avoid missing many days of school for maternity leave. In fact, with her first child Kendra returned two weeks early from her maternity leave so that the students wouldn’t be without a teacher at the beginning of school. Kendra says that while still on maternity leave she agreed to teach a teacher training workshop and decided to take her month-old baby with her to the training. “It was just an informal workshop and I said, well shoot, she’s four weeks old and all she’s going to do is sleep, so I just took her with me.” Kendra was surprised at the

reaction of her fellow teachers. “Everyone’s like ‘I can’t believe you brought your baby! Oh, oh, oh’” (I361-364). When I asked Kendra why she thought people reacted like that she replied: “They were worried about her, worried about me. ‘Why are you here? Take your other two weeks’” (I370)! Kendra reasoned that since she had already missed the first week of school she saw no need to miss any more and inconvenience the principal and other teachers any longer: ‘What’s the point? . . . Oh well, it’s so much easier to come in and get started than it is to come in later” (I372-373).

Another example Kendra gave demonstrating concern for her principal is when she was selected by Principal Smith to lead a group of teachers in a standardized testing tutorial. Substitutes for the classrooms had been hired and Kendra was intending to dedicate the day to T.A.A.S. tutorial training. The night before the training was to take place Kendra’s baby came down with pink eye. The next day after calling in sick Kendra came before school to drop off her lesson plans with the substitute and found Principal Smith to apologize. “I said, ‘I am so sorry.’ And she said, ‘Kendra, life happens. Go home and take care of your baby’” (I2813-2814).

Having nourished her relationship with her principals in such a committed manner led Kendra to being richly rewarded in the last year of our conversations. Kendra is excited to share with me that she had been selected by Principal Smith to serve as the school’s math specialist- a new position created by Principal Smith and funded by grant monies. “I’m honored she selected me . . . For her to think enough of me to do that, it means a lot” (WC#4). Kendra was pulled from the classroom, given an office with a telephone and placed in charge of teacher training and some teacher supervision. When I asked why Kendra believes she was given this promotion she says:

> I’m not an administrator, but I’m kind of acting like an administrator. She put me in that position because she thinks of me as a professional and I’m proud to have

> earned her respect. I feel very close to her . . . We work very well together and I can sit down and talk to her (I4324-4325, WC #4).

Kendra explains that she is a little nervous about working with adults since her experience on her team last year with some of the teachers was not very pleasant. However, Kendra shares that she knows that Principal Smith is on her side. "The teachers that gave me trouble last year when I was grade coordinator were all moved to second grade so I will not have any dealings with them at all. My principal made sure of that" (WC#3). Kendra is looking forward to getting out of the classroom and acting more in the capacity of an administrator: "I'm gonna' love my new job I do believe. I'll have an office. My principal was just talking to me the other day. She said 'You're gonna' work your buns off girl, I'm telling you.' I said, 'Okay, I'm ready' (I3988-3990).

A few months later Kendra reflects on her new position and how far she has come in one year's time.

> You've seen the statistics where we lose one third of the work force between year five and 10 in teaching? Well, I was there. Because mid-year, I was like, I gotta do something else. It was getting too heavy and I don't ever want to feel that. I spend too much time at work in any job to be dissatisfied. That's a third of your life (I5152-5155).

When I flip through transcripts from our previous interviews, I see that Kendra had already told me she was thinking about leaving teaching. Just one year earlier Kendra had casually mentioned: "Hopefully in a couple of years, I'll be doing something different" (I1887-1888). Kendra is very happy about her new position. She says: "I can't thank my principal enough" (I5272). In our last interview she tells me what Principal Smith had told her the previous year. "She told me this time last year, 'Kendra, it's time for you to come out . . . You have too much to offer to limit yourself to 22 kids. I need you on a larger scale so that you can impact more teachers and more kids'" (I5277, 5286-5287).

Kendra says that for the past year or so she had just been hanging in there waiting for Principal Smith to throw her the lifeline she had promised. When I ask Kendra if she would consider returning to the classroom again I am dismayed by her quick response laced with laughter: “No, never. Drag me kicking and screaming” (I5031)!

Conclusion to Kendra’s Case Study

Kendra struggles with an internal battle. On one hand, she is expected to live the traditional life of a homemaker; household and children are considered her responsibilities. As long as she is able to fulfill these responsibilities, she has the freedom to do what she loves- work outside the home. Kendra admits, to me anyway, a lack of desire to stay home with her children. Because she feels a deep sense of responsibility to her home and family, the time she spends away from them is laced with guilt. Rather than being able to enjoy the fact that her girls are so happy in daycare, Kendra can’t help but worry knowing that the girls would rather spend the day at daycare than with their mom. The second theme that was highlighted in our conversations was Kendra’s relationship with her principals. Kendra is very appreciative of working in a supportive environment and, as a result, willingly assists her principals wherever she is needed. Kendra is a very intelligent woman who, although she claims to enjoy living in a subservient manner to her husband at home, seems to relish gathering power and making alliances within the context of her job. Through her willingness to consistently go above and beyond what is expected of her at school, she has successfully aligned herself with Principal Smith and been richly rewarded for her efforts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT LAURA

Laura is a warm-hearted thirty-five year old Latino woman who moved with her husband to the United States shortly after being married. Laura’s parents were living in

California on a two-year work visa when she was born. Although her parents returned to Argentina, Laura knew that having been born in the United States made her different than her four siblings and opened special doors for her future. Laura is the eldest of five children and the only one in the family to have dual United States and Argentinean citizenship. Although initially Laura and her husband only intended to stay in the States for a year or two to earn money to take back home, they have since decided to make the States their permanent home.

Laura speaks English with a slight accent and occasionally uses words that don't quite fit what she appears to be intending to say. Regardless, there is never any doubt about what she wants to communicate since her body language and face speak equally as well for her as her words. Laura has big beautiful brown eyes that, depending on her mood, seem to change from light to dark brown in color. Her wavy, long black hair cascades down her shoulders and surrounds her face similar to how a frame outlines a painting. As Laura speaks, her hands accompany her words. They move all around, not in a distracting manner, but rather more as emphasis to what she is saying. The tone of her throaty deep voice reflects her mood and I imagine would make it difficult for her to hide her feelings. I suspect that this though has never really been a problem for Laura since she is extremely straightforward and always speaks her mind- regardless of whether she has positive or negative things to say.

Of all three of the women in my study Laura is the one with whom I could most easily relate. I am not sure if this is because she completely opened her heart to me, because she is the person with whom I spent the most time over the three years that I gathered data for this study, or if it is because many of her struggles were so similar to those in my life.

Laura is an emotional, passionate person. Her life is either wonderful and she is on cloud nine, or nothing is going well and she is in the depths of despair. Although we only met at the beginning of my research study, Laura and I shared moments that usually come only after years of friendship. What surely brought us even closer together was the diagnosis, extended demise and ultimate death of our mutual friend's husband with brain cancer. And then there was the time when she asked me to come to her school one day and she broke down in tears, saying she didn't know what to do about her life and how she didn't think she could go on any further. The best time we spent together was the morning she returned from the hospital after giving birth to her baby girl and she asked her husband to request that I come over. We spent the morning at her house basking in the glow of a newborn baby, snacking on cookies and watching her baby sleep and nurse while Laura's mother visiting from Argentina made us coffee and tried to amuse Laura's son.

Laura's dedication to her extended family is amazing. When we first began meeting her sister was living with Laura and her family. Laura had sponsored her sister to come to the United States from Argentina and was financially supporting her while she attended school. Laura explains that she and her husband are very good at saving money. Although up until the last year that we met her husband had been in school and Laura had been the sole financial provider for the family, Laura consistently managed to save money every week in order to enable her parents to come for an extended stay from Argentina. "No one has money in Argentina. The economy is horrible, so if I want my parents to come, I have to save the money. It's like $3,000. And we do. It's not so hard when you have a goal" (I1458-1460).

Laura has a distinctly different attitude toward authority and the world in general than most of the teachers with whom she works. I suspect that this is partially a result of

Laura being raised abroad and partially a result of having earned a Masters degree in political science in Argentina. Laura believes that she has been empowered to make a difference in the world. As such, she feels compelled to speak her mind. “It’s important to speak up about injustices. Especially with the bilingual kids at school. If I don’t talk, who will” (WC#1)?

Laura has worked a wide variety of jobs but she believes teaching is her gift. She shares with me that in her life, whatever she has done and whatever she will do in the future will revolve around teaching in some capacity.

> If I consider teaching in the broad sense of the word I consider myself an educator all along. Wanting to be a P.E. teacher, was part of wanting to be a teacher. Being a counselor was almost by chance but what got me there were my teaching skills- both with children and adults. And my wanting to understand political relations is a way of linking education to empowerment. If I know and analyze my reality I can make any changes to that reality. I’ve always seen my mission as helping people to access knowledge, at times I saw myself as someone who would help people, children and adults, to open their eyes to realities (WC#1).

Laura concludes her thoughts about her future by writing: “I’m sure I am not going to be a classroom teacher all my life. At the same time I’m sure I’ll be an educator all my life” (WC#1).

Laura was first drawn to teaching when she began to seriously consider her job prospects while in college. She had completed almost four of the five required years of college majoring in political science when it dawned on her that her job prospects were slim. “I realized I was not gonna get a job as a political analyst (I223).” While in college, Laura taught in a Methodist school as an aide. She recalls how this experience pulled her toward teaching as a career. Laura explains: “I’d been doing lots of teaching and I’d been doing lots of reading about Pablo Freire and early literacy and I really liked Piaget” (I251-252). Laura decided to complete coursework for a three-year education degree simultaneously with her four-year degree in political science in order to improve her job

prospects. Unfortunately, her graduation from college was accompanied by a spiraling downfall of the Argentinean economy. Because the salaries were so low most teachers worked two full time teaching positions to make enough money. Laura realized that she would be unable to survive on a teacher's salary. "I couldn't support myself teaching" (I403). It was at this point that her boyfriend took a 3-month trip to the United States. He called her from abroad asking for her hand in marriage and saying that he thought they should begin their married life in the States. Laura's parents quickly planned a huge wedding reception and one week later Laura was married and on her way to begin her new life abroad. "We got married and his paperwork was easy. He got residency right away" (I382-383).

Once in the States, Laura was aggravated to discover that her 3 year teaching degree from Argentina was not recognized. After working wide variety of jobs- waitress at a hamburger restaurant, swim coach, crisis intervention counselor at an abused women's shelter and curriculum writer for a violence prevention program, Laura decided that she wanted to teach in American schools. She enrolled in a Masters Program for bilingual education and was hired for her first bilingual education teaching position shortly after beginning her coursework.

Themes for Laura's Case Study

The overriding theme to Laura's story is her conception of power. She speaks in depth about not only how she perceives gender and power in society and specifically in her school, but also about she struggles with her administrator over power. The second theme that emerged from communications with Laura is how, as result of her feeling constrained and unappreciated at school, she feels forced to draw boundaries in her life between school and home in order to maintain a sense of self.

In the following sections I will first discuss Laura's perception of power and gender and how this has negatively influenced her relationship with Principal Smith. Second, I will address how her personal understanding of power and self-empowerment clash with how she perceives power being used at school and how her inability to reconcile the two has resulted in her drawing clear lines of demarcation between her home and school lives.

Laura's Impressions of the Power and Gender at School and Her Relationship with Principal Smith

Ever since she was hired her first month into working on her Masters degree in education Laura has struggled with politics in schools. Laura believes this struggle is due to her strongly held impressions of power and gender. "I ask all sorts of questions. I have many opinions about power and gender and these aren't talked about at all in the schools" (WC#2). She directly relates the stifling sense that she feels at school ("I feel like I can't breathe sometimes sitting in all those meetings listening and not ever speaking my mind" [WC#2]) to what she discovered about power and gender in Argentina. Laura explains that she first began solidifying her conception of the role of power and empowerment while in college.

> I was interested in empowerment . . . in power- about how to generate democratic power, right? . . . Well, I had the idea of power and body and the idea . . . because I was reading Foucault and the idea that power, organized bodies, institutions. Institutions- like hospitals, schools, jails- they organize bodies. I had the idea of power, especially if our bodies are under control (I898-900, 917-919).

Laura talks about how she further expanded her understanding of the concept of power to include gender while researching and writing her Masters thesis in political science.

> And I thought through education that was a way to generate power- among children, amongst the lower class. And then, among women we also had the problem of being not in power and not being empowered. We didn't have access

> to decision making places or our place was always less- whatever we do it's always less money, it doesn't matter what social status you are. So, I realized that I was interested in what were the specific things that in this group of very poor women, very indigent women, that I worked with they saw as different from men. So my idea was how did they see themselves as different from men. If they had the idea of gender, or if it was just an idea of the middle class . . . the idea of gender came out of that (I900-910).

Laura views herself as a victim of male-defined expectations for teachers in schools. She sees schools she views as male driven, empowered institutions. "It's about controlling bodies, I really think it's a male concept. Because it's always been like that. Males have been in power" (I926-927). Laura explains that her major frustration is with Principal Smith who, although a woman, is merely acting as a representative of patriarchal society. "Every time we have a 'good leader' it's a man. Or it's a woman who has male characteristics. The person that portrays it the best has the power" (I927-928).

Within our patriarchal societal structure teaching is viewed as women's work while the power of regulation of the teachers is held in the hands of administrators. According to Strober and Tyack (1990) "Traditionally women have occupied subordinate positions in schools; they have been classroom teachers, while men have occupied positions of administrative power" (cited in Weiler, 1988, p. 102). Even when administrators are female, they remain representatives of this patriarchy and thus behave in a manner expected of them. With her research of women in administrative positions, Weiler writes that:

> The position of these women administrators in the bureaucracy of schools provides them with certain opportunities to exercise power at the same time, however, they are constrained in a variety of ways. They exercise powers within the clearly understood rules and practices of a hierarchal structure; their position of authority influences and limits the solidarity and collectivity which they share with like-minded teachers, since they are institutionally not equals (1988, p. 102).

Laura's ongoing struggles with school are often directly related to her interpretation of power and gender at school. One day when we meet, Laura gives an

example of how her conception about the disparity of power in schools has just recently been played out in her school life.

> For example, and stop me if I speak too much here, about choosing the bilingual teacher of the year . . . They had three nominees- one of which was a man who is brand new to the profession- he's not certified, and HE was chosen! . . . I think he was chosen because he comes from the corporate world. He has all these ideas of controlling bodies and children and they think that he's good at what he's doing because HE'S A MAN! I think that's why they chose him, because he's a man. That's it. This just gets repeated over and over in so many institutions. That is, if you're a man, especially when you're in a majority of women, you have an advantage, really an advantage. I have no proof . . . but that's how I feel. They must have some kind of authority that we don't have. I don't understand it (I928-938).

Laura's heightened awareness to issues of power and gender in schools has resulted in her recognizing the injustices at school. At the same time though, she seems unable to take the next step and fashion a life outside of the social constructions that she recognizes as limiting her in her own life. I suspect that this has something to do with the fact that, until recently, she has been the sole financial provider for her family. Laura tells me that her husband has been in graduate school. "He was a full-time student for five years" (I2222). Therefore, her teaching job supported her and her husband, their two children as well as Laura's sister who was living with them: "my sister, she was with us for more than a year. That was a really long time" (I1574-1575). It seems to me that Laura knew exactly how far she was able to push at school without endangering her job. In fact, it was only toward the latter part of our interviews together that Laura began to actively begin to question the status quo in her life. "I just don't agree with so many things happening in the schools" (I965-966).

Although one might think that at the conclusion of our interviews, when Laura decided to take a leave of absence from her job she might be trying avoid confrontation, I do not believe that this was the case. Instead, I believe that it was her way of reclaiming

her life as her own. She tells me how important it is to her to take the time she needs to rejuvenate herself: “you have some time off. Some time off to reenergize, find myself as a mother, a human being. When I teach, I feel like I give and give and give and give and give and give and this time I use . . . for myself and for the kids” (I1746-1748). Since her family no longer relies solely on her salary for survival, she is free to take the time she needs to re-focus and possibly find a teaching position where her perceptions of power and gender are more in line with the life she lives.

Although Laura may not be play the traditional role of a good team member in schools by unquestioningly following the lead of Principal Smith, she is amazingly dedicated to serving her students the best she possibly can. Her professional development is not fueled by state or district requirements, but rather a dedication to her students, and a thirst for knowledge, and a sincere desire to improve her teaching. She explains:

> One thing I have done every year of my five years of teaching in the public system is create a goal or a challenge. Most of these challenges had made me grow and had taught me was possible or not in terms of applying theory into reality. For example, one year I focused on conflict resolution and interpersonal problem solving. I’ve created such a respectful community among each other that it has stayed with me as part of my teaching methodology since then. It was possible to empower through self-knowledge. Another year I created an after-school Playback Theatre company. Students themselves were the actors and facilitated sharing stories of other students, in and out of school, through improvisational theater. It was possible and it was made. I loved it!!! Another year I taught myself math. Math with manipulatives every day was my goal. I did it, it was possible and it was done. I loved it. It is also part of my daily methodologies. Another year I focused on student’s reading assessment, another year I also focused on parent participation, on record keeping etc. (WC#4).

Despite her commitment to her students, she has had difficulty establishing a good relationship with her supervisor. Laura’s dedication is to her students, not to Principal Smith. She is not interested in playing a game of tit for tat with Principal Smith in order to get the things she believes that she needs to serve her students. “I don’t see why I should play some sort of game so I can get the things I need to be a good teacher”

(WC#3). She has also either not recognized, or simply doesn't care, about the American manner of asking for things in a roundabout manner. As a result, Principal Smith has criticized her for being too demanding. She explains: "The principal told me: 'All you ever do is want and want'" Laura shakes her head: "My God, it's not for me. It's for the students! What is she thinking" (WC#4)? Laura seems to have fallen into a societal trap for women that Canella writes about- how opposing administrators and seeking to exercise power is considered unprofessional behavior for teachers (1997).

At times, Laura seems to purposely go against expected behavior at school. For example, when she is criticizing her administrator or fellow teachers, she never shuts her door nor does she appear to make any effort to lower her voice. One day, for example, we are sitting in her classroom talking. Teachers and students are wandering the halls and every now and then a teacher will pop her head in to Laura's classroom and ask her a question. An announcement comes in over the intercom. Laura raises her hands in frustration and comments:

> I've been feeling claustrophobic in this school. And I think it would be in every school because I feel that the institution has too much pressure to have these kids line up, following instructions- the teachers as well as the kids, and I just feel really, like it's a JAIL . . . I just have that feeling that there is so much pressure- because of the standardized test. The kids today had their first test, they are going to be tested until Thursday. And because of the results oriented society we have I am supposed to show that the kids are doing better. I'm just tired of shoving objectives, or whatever I need to do for them to get where they need to be (I920-922, 942-946).

Laura is also very resentful and vocal about what she considers the excessive supervision she receives from Principal Smith. Connell writes about the difficulties experienced by teachers as a result of extensive and sustained intervention in schools undergoing renovation: "Close supervision causes resentment; it has been a fruitful source of industrial unrest in education . . ." (1985, p. 129). The following year, Laura tells me about the school's results from the state standardized test she had been nervous

about. Laura explains that because their school received a low performing grade from the state, all teachers are now required to use portfolios in each subject to show the progress that each child is making in his/her learning.

> We teach all the subjects so we have to have a portfolio for Math, for Reading, Language Arts, Writing and Science . . . That's something that I don't agree with. Imagine getting all these baskets with all these notebooks. And when you're in early childhood, it's very difficult for them to know when and where they are supposed to write . . . So YOU have to get those ready, because the kids can't do that . . . otherwise they try to put everything under their desks and it's a mess . . . They take them home, they leave them home. So I don't let them take anything home, only the homework notebooks, that's it. I forgot that one- so that's an extra one- SIX! It looks good, but it's way too much for the students, for the teachers (I2028-2029, 2034, 2042, 2045-2048).

She recalls how one day she was so busy teaching the kids the colors of the notebooks Principal Smith wanted them to use and how each of the colors corresponded to a subject that she completely forgot about the school-wide silent reading program scheduled for that morning. She describes how Principal Smith walked into her classroom and, without even a glace at all the notebooks, scolded her for her kids not participating in the silent reading. She said: "You need to be reading!" and left the room (I1896). Laura remembers thinking as Principal Smith left the classroom:

> One part of me is like, no matter how much you give there is always going to be someone chasing me saying 'you didn't do this, you didn't do that.' Instead of saying: 'You did really good with this!' So, one part of me is, not sarcastic, but numb. The system is not going to recognize what I do, no matter how much I work (I2118-2121).

Laura was so upset about the situation that she went out of her way to find Principal Smith in the hall and told her: "Next time, please catch me doing something good. When I've been good" (I1903-1904).

Laura struggles with wanting to be acknowledged for her efforts with students, yet not truly understanding, nor desiring to learn how to play, the game of politics. Laura's honest expression of concerns at school is not without consequence. Laura is

aggravated not to have been nominated for the previously mentioned bilingual teacher of the year award. “I’m not into prizes, but I wanted to get nominated. And I didn’t go to the meeting where they say: ‘Who wants to be the teachers of the year?’ So I was not in that meeting and no body nominated me” (I929-931).

Laura’s tendency to speak her mind has resulted in more unpleasant consequences. Laura describes how when she was pregnant and needed a favor from Principal Smith she could not count on Principal Smith for a favor. Laura describes how the many of the teachers at her school are required by Principal Smith to stay after school and tutor students for the state standardized tests. Although Laura enjoys working with small groups, she explains that since she was pregnant, by the end of the day she was exhausted and overwhelmed by all of the things she needed to accomplish. “I was very tired and I know that I needed more time and I cannot find it” (WC#3). Laura remembers that she needed to stay long hours after tutoring to get everything done for school the next day. “So I asked my principal if I could quit tutoring. And she didn’t say ‘no’ but said that I should consider it bla bla bla” (I1296-1297). According to Laura the message from Principal Smith was clear; Laura did not stop tutoring in the afternoons. Laura shakes her head and with tears welling up in her eyes says, “I had no choice; I had to” (I1297).

As previously mentioned, Liebermann and Miller write about how teachers who have a good relationship with the principal tend to gain access to the wealth of privileges to which the principal has access (1992, p. 12). For Laura, not having this good relationship has had unpleasant consequences. Laura is frustrated with the power Principal Smith has over her. Laura isn’t able to clearly articulate what she may have done to aggravate Principal Smith, but she senses that for whatever reason, they have not always been on the best of terms. Mid summer we are sitting by the pool and Laura is remembering her past year of teaching and what may have been the cause for that chasm:

“I think, maybe I’m not good at politics, maybe that’s it . . . I usually say what I think. It’s not like I can be this sweet, nice lady” (I1775-1780).

Cannella (1997) describes how the virtue of submissiveness for women has historically been regarded as making them ideal teachers. She describes how Catherine Beecher, in her 1853 request to Congress for the support of national education, “maintained that domesticity, self-sacrifice, and submissiveness were the morally superior female characteristics that were needed in education (p. 141). Cannella continues by describing how the interpretation of women’s virtues of “patience, silence and self-denial” contrast sharply with women’s vices of “pride, willfulness, and activity” (1997, p. 141).

Descriptions of the virtues and vices of women give us some insight into the reasons for Laura’s struggles with Principal Smith at school. Although I sincerely believe that Laura is a wonderful teacher, it is very obvious that she does not fit in well at her school. There is a dramatic difference in the way that Principal Smith treats Laura verses how she treats Patricia and Kendra. In fact, Laura seems to be being punished for something, although she is unable to articulate what she may have done to deserve this treatment. Laura tells me that before school let out Principal Smith told her that she would be moved down a grade. “I’m not exactly sure what I did or didn’t do, but I know I don’t have a good relationship with my principal and it’s hurting me now” (WC#3). When I ask her how she feels about the change in assignment Laura shrugs and, referring to Principal Smith, says: “I’m sure that she and other people saw it as a demotion . . . It made me feel like a failure. I cried . . . It was very, very painful for me. You don’t want to get looked at like you’re not a good teacher” (I2015, 1403, 1421-1422).

As an outsider, I see how Cannella’s description of willfulness as a vice can be related to Laura. Laura explains that she has so many ideas that she wants to try with her

students and is so enthusiastic about her teaching that she suspects that sometimes she comes across as brash. She recalls a comment made to her by Principal Smith who critically said to her: “Ever since you came, you came with all these ideas’” (I1817). Laura admits: “And it’s true, I don’t mean to appear like that, but it’s true. When I have something in mind, I just state it so bluntly . . .” (I1818-1819). Principal Smith appears to be punishing Laura for not adhering to societal expectations for virtuous teachers by avoiding willful behavior and adopting an attitude of patience.

Toward the end of the year Laura e-mails me and asks me to come to see her during the day at school. I meet her at her classroom door as she walks in from taking her students to art class. She hugs me and before we even sit down, the floodgates open and Laura loudly exclaims: “I’m losing part of my humanity.” Without shutting the door, Laura puts her head down on the table and loudly sobs: “I know it sounds too radical, but that’s how I feel . . . I’m WAY off balance” (I959-960). When I ask why she feels that way, Laura explains that the state standardized tests are being given that week. “If a good job means I need to have results and every kid had to pass, I’m not getting a good feeling from the administrators, I have to say that . . . It just takes the fun out of teaching . . .” Tears well up in Laura’s eyes as she mumbles: “I want to cry about this I really do” (I989-991, 1007).

Again, Laura is not conforming to accepted teacher behaviors by silently submitting to patriarchal authority. Instead, she actively searched me out to complain about her situation at school and did not make attempts to hide her unhappiness. This activity is identified by Cannella (1997) as a vice of women that society believes should be avoided by good teachers. Lastly, while Laura was on her maternity leave and was trying to decide whether she should take an extended leave of absence from school she admits that she is thinking of what is best for her at this moment in life. “ . . . since I’ve

been so stressed out and thinking about where I want to go on from here I want to take this time for me . . . This is my present after my third child and putting my husband through college" (I2142-2144). Again, Laura is not submitting to societal expectations of teacher behavior by exhibiting the trait of self-denial which Canella identifies as a virtue of good teachers (1997).

Boundary Lines Drawn by Laura

For Laura, meeting what she describes as excessive demands placed upon her by the school principal has been a huge strain. She writes: "No matter how much I give to school, it's never enough . . . I don't like to feel like I'm not doing a good job . . ." (WC#4). In response to this pressure, she describes how she has separated her life into spheres- one for school and one for home. Laura explains that her new approach entails giving her best while at school- but only during contract hours. She does not go in early to school, nor does she stay past the time indicated on her contract. "I really work hard. I give my best every minute. I don't even make phone calls. I used to make phone calls home, now I don't even have time" (I1924-1925). I am saddened as I listen to her and the shift in attitude that has taken place since we first met. She explains:

> I'm going to take one day at a time. To tell you the truth, I really don't care. I care very much when I'm there, but that's it . . . It's the best way to live your life or otherwise you go crazy . . . you know how many extra hours I was giving? One extra day of work every week. I was working from 7 to 4:30 or 5. Every day. It was way too much . . . I figured out I was giving them a whole extra day every week (I2066-2067, 2071-2073).

Nippert-Eng addresses the issue of boundaries in her book *Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries through Everyday Life.* In this book she focuses on boundary placement- where the line between realms is drawn and also on how, through the formation of boundaries, people create and maintain distinct "territories of the self" (1996). Laura is thrilled that her parents are both coming from Argentina to help with her

baby. Laura has a positive attitude about plans she has made for returning to the classroom after the conclusion of her maternity leave. She tells me that she has everything all worked out. She describes her plan: “There will not be so much suffering. I know that the baby is well taken care of, really well taken care of with my mom and now my dad too” (I1507-1508). It is significant to note that Laura’s new found separation between her school and home lives has been made in reaction to her unhappiness at school and the feeling that her efforts at school have gone unrecognized. In addition, although Laura says that she believes that dividing her life in this manner is the best thing for her, she does not seem remotely at peace with her decision, nor as happy as she was when we first met two years earlier.

And, in fact, just six months later we meet at Laura’s house and Laura explains that her approach of dividing her life into segments did not work. In a follow-up e-mail she explains that she thinks this was because it was not her students or her children for whom she was dividing her life, but rather for herself. “I still suffered, even when I drew those lines. Because nothing really changed- it wasn’t time as much as it was ME” (WC#4). Dividing her life up in that manner just made her feel more frustrated and confused and she is glad to have been able to take off for maternity leave. “It didn’t work for me at all. I felt like I was trying to be two different people and that ended up making me feel confused about who I really am and uncomfortable about the situation ” (WC#4).

Laura struggled horribly with the decision about whether she should return to the classroom after her maternity leave was nearly over. Laura explains that she knew that her baby would be her last and recalls how she began dreading returning to school: “I knew that I wanted to stay with my kids. I wanted to see them grow, but I had a lot of guilty feelings” (I2213-2214). Laura felt torn between acting in a manner that she considered was professional- not resigning mid-year, and wanting to do what she wanted

to do for the first time since she could remember. “I was suffering and struggling . . .” (I2334). Laura explains that she could barely handle the guilt she felt leaving her kids at school without a teacher and she didn’t want to be labeled a quitter. She told herself: “I’m not going to leave in the middle of the year; that’s not right. I will go back” (I2241-2242). At the same time though, Laura continued to fret about her decision: “I really didn’t want to go back. It’s my last baby and I wanted to enjoy her” (I2334-2335).

It is interesting to note that Laura appears to struggle so much with her decision to stay home in large part because she feels selfish and guilty for wanting to do what is best for herself. She does not believe that her staying home is necessarily better for her children. Laura is honest and explains that her ultimate decision to take a leave of absence was not made because she was concerned about the impact her working had upon her children, but rather because she herself needed time off from the classroom. “This time I was not worried that they would get good quality childcare, I could have found somebody” (I2236-2237). This time, Laura explains, the difference is that she was thinking about what was best for her. “the difference was me. It was me” (I2237).

Laura’s words ring similarly to those of a teacher in the research study by Hargreaves and Tucker (1991) who describes her struggle: “I have a great inner conflict. Where do I have the time to look after who I am, the person . . .” (p. 494). Maushart writes about this very urge of primary parenting. “ . . . the desire to put one’s children at the pulsating center of one’s life, rather than nearly stacked around its periphery- remains an astonishingly powerful force in the lives of women” (1999, p. 201).

As previously quoted, Goodson writes “Administrators are widely condemned as executors of the arbitrary and excessive controls of the system” (1992, p. 193) and are also “the source of the most persistent and profound school problems” (1992, p. 195). In Laura’s opinion, this was the case at her school. On one of the last days of Laura’s

maternity leave, Laura's substitute stopped by her house and complained that Principal Smith had implemented a new rule. Laura thinks for a moment: "What was it exactly? Oh yes. Now, they cannot talk to each other in the hallways. The teachers! . . . Both in the hall and when you are outside on car duty or whatever. And that's just the spirit, It's just so humiliating" (I2433-2450). Laura said that hearing this confirmed to Laura that her own impressions of the school were accurate: "She was saying exactly what I was seeing. So it's not like I'm crazy or just making excuses. It was too much stress. It was exactly the reality check I needed" (I2428-2429). It was at that moment that Laura decided she could not go back to her classroom. Laura explains that although she had every reason to return to her classroom - a nice class, a new title as dyslexia specialist thanks to training she had recently completed, parents who flew in from Argentina to take care of her children, she instead opted to fill out the paperwork for an unpaid leave of absence. She remembers thinking: "It's not worth it, the stress of trying to both mother and teach now at that school . . . I don't care if I have to eat poor for a while . . . I really don't care" (WC#5, I2358).

Laura notes that if she had had a better environment at her school and a more supporting administrator, she might not have taken a leave of absence. Laura explains that her school does not have a supportive atmosphere. She compares her current school to her previous one where she was teaching when her first and second babies were born. With those children she took only four weeks off. She proudly shares that despite going back so soon to teach, she was able to reach her goal of nursing both kids for 14 months while continuing to teach full time. She credits this in large part to the administrators at her school for being so receptive to her husband bringing the babies to her classroom during planning time so that she could breastfeed.

Now, although she only lives two blocks from her current school, she suspects that Principal Smith would not have been supportive of her returning home during the day to nurse her baby. She explains that she was scared to ask if this was even a possibility: “I was very hesitant because of the atmosphere of the school- that it was too demanding, too stressful” (I2207-2208). Laura explains that even if she had wanted to ask, she would have had difficulty gaining access to Principal Smith since she has been unable to make any contact with her in the past six months. Laura explains that several times she stopped by Principal Smith’s office to talk with her about her plans regarding her maternity leave, but that she had never been able to get past the secretary. “Her door was closed and I talked to the secretary and the secretary was like, ‘no, she’s busy.’ And that’s how it’s been since school started. Always door closed” (I1887-1889).

Conclusion to Laura’s Case Study

From the first time we spoke, I could sense that Laura was an extremely dedicated teacher. Her love for her students and passion for teaching them were readily apparent in the words she choose to speak and in the manner in which she spoke them. Despite this, over the course of the three years we communicated, I saw Laura change from a dedicated teacher to one who segmented her life, refusing to work past 3:30 p.m. because she was not being paid for this extra time, to ultimately one who gave up her teaching position because she could no longer handle the stress and inconsistencies in her life. From what I could tell, Laura’s descent into unhappiness was mostly due to frustrations with expectations for public school teachers in general, and overall poor relations with her administrator. Laura, whether culturally or through her education, is a very honest person who prefers to address issues directly. This abrasive tendency was perceived by Principal Smith as a threat to her authority and time and time again Laura was punished

for this tendency to question authority and unwillingness to cave in to administrative demands.

CONCLUSION

The stories of the three women in this study are each unique in many ways from the others, yet similarities exist which link the women to each other in their struggle to combine mothering and teaching. Overriding all other aspects of their lives is the experience that each of the three women has dealing with societal pressure that lays out expectations for them both as teachers and as mothers.

Patricia is frustrated with feeling that decisions in her life are not hers to make. On one hand she struggles with being the mother her husband wants her to be, yet on the other hand she feels a strong need to be physically present at school. She enjoys her job and doesn't want to risk other teachers or Principal Smith questioning whether she is doing a good job. Kendra struggles with societal and religious expectations she feels have been put upon her as a mother. Kendra loves working outside the home and admits that she doesn't think that she would ever want to be a stay at home mom. At the same time though, Kendra senses that society, although it may allow her to work, expects her to have a desire to stay home with her kids should her family not need her income to survive. Laura also struggles with societal expectations for her as a teacher and a mother. But similar to Patricia, Laura is frustrated with not feeling as if she is free to make decisions about her own life. Unlike both Patricia and Kendra though, Laura wishes to base her decisions, not on what might be best for her students or her family, but rather what is best for herself as an individual.

Societal expectations laid out for these women act like chains that tether them both to their classrooms and to their families and, as walking around in chains would certainly do, chafe the women. The chains are constant reminders of expectations others

hold for them and certainly make their lives uncomfortable and more difficult than if they could free themselves from the chains and walk the path they wish.

Chapter Five: Cross Case Analysis and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

The women in this study are living proof of the challenges that mother teachers face on a daily basis. The thoughts and words they shared with me were overflowing with descriptions of these struggles. A lack of peace was clearly apparent in both their school lives as well as at home. One moment they would claim that teaching is family friendly profession, but then, in the next, confess their struggles with mothering and teaching by giving numerous descriptions from their lives which indicated that teaching was, in fact, not a good job for mothers after all.

CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

In this chapter I discuss the findings of my research. There are five interconnected themes that were frequently repeated in my communications with each of the three women which I detail in this cross case analysis. The first theme, Teachers Want to Live up to Expectations, highlights the ways in which the women feel constrained by societal expectations for them as teachers. The second theme, Principal as Gatekeeper of Perks and Promotions describes how Principal Smith acted as a gatekeeper for perks and favors, giving preferential treatment to teachers with whom she had the best relationship. The third theme, Expectations for Mothers, discusses expectations inherent in the lives of these mother teachers. The fourth theme is Guilt and includes information about how the mother teachers felt guilty sacrificing their families (and risked being considered bad mothers) in their quest to be considered good teachers as well as how they felt guilty for sacrificing their students (and risked being considered bad teachers) in their quest to be considered good mothers. The fifth and final theme is Boundaries. In this section I

explain how, in attempts to pacify their guilty consciences, the women all drew boundaries in order to separate their school and home lives from each other.

Teachers Want to Live Up to Expectations

The teachers express anxiety in trying to live up to expectations for them and experience frustration and guilt when they are unable to live up to expectations set by the "patriarchal societal structure" as part of the discourse of professionalism in schools (Cannella, 1997, p. 138). The mother teachers complain about the amount of work that they need to accomplish in and outside of their classrooms and wonder how they can possibly complete it all.

Kendra describes how she feels overwhelmed with knowing what she needs to do at school, but not knowing where to find the time to do it all.

> Trying to plan for all these subjects and grade all these subjects, and keep up with books and papers and workbooks for all the kids . . . it's just too much . . . it's an extreme amount of grading (WC#2, I1122).

Laura is equally frustrated with sensing that no matter how much she gives to school, her efforts are not appreciated.

> No matter how much I give to school, it's never enough . . . I don't like to feel like I'm not doing a good job (I1766-1767).

All of the mother teachers speak of a desire to meet expectations. As Canella (1997) describes, teachers, in constructing themselves, judge their own worth based upon a "truth" perpetrated by the discourse. In turn, they become docile bodies managed by outside powers (Canella, 1997). Although the outside powers seem to come from a variety of sources including other teachers, parents, as well as themselves, the teachers nevertheless place full responsibility for feeling as if they need to live up to expectations on the shoulders of Principal Smith.

In conversations with Patricia, it is apparent that she has an unwavering commitment to expectations that she perceives have been set forth by Principal Smith for the teachers at her school. She wants to impress not only Principal Smith, but also her fellow teachers. She reflects this when she describes how she wants others to know that she is equally committed to teaching as they are by making every effort to have other teachers see her putting in as much time as them at school. “I want teachers to see me putting in time at school. I want them to know that I’m here for them-whenever” (I1814).

Patricia gives us yet another insight into her impression of how her interpretation of professionalism at school results in how she self-governs her behavior. She recalls how, upon becoming pregnant, she was anxious about how Principal Smith might respond to the news that she would need to take maternity leave at an inconvenient time. “I remember I was nervous telling our principal because that would have put my delivery date right at the time of Christmas after school started back” (I1181-1182). Perhaps even more curious is how concerned Patricia was about how Principal Smith would react to having a pregnant teacher at school. “I was nervous . . . I mean, I’d be big and pregnant you know, when school started. And I didn’t know what would happen . . .” (I1182-1183).

Part of the discourse of professionalism is the importance of how teachers are viewed by other teachers (Cannella, 1997). The teachers sense not only that they are responsible for governing their own behavior, but recognize that they are judged by others as well. Patricia and Kendra acknowledge the importance of this to them when, after describing the special privileges they have been awarded by Principal Smith, they rush to assure me that the other teachers were not resentful of their reduced work load. Patricia says: “I didn’t have duties in the morning or in the afternoon . . . but no one complained . . .” (I1184-1185, WC#1). Kendra, speaking of how her fellow teachers

reacted to her being permitted to leave campus and rest during her pregnancy comments: "no one had a problem with it . . ." (I298).

To Laura, how she is perceived by others is especially important to her. "I am kind of upset about not being nominated for the bilingual teacher of the year. I wasn't in that meeting, so I'm not sure what happened, but I think someone would have thought of saying my name" (WC#2). Laura also mentions how wanting to meet expectations has resulted in her feeling as if she is unable to freely make decisions in her life. She is aggravated by sensing that she should be making personal decisions based on not what is best for her as an individual, but rather how she feels the decision will be viewed by others. When debating whether she should take a leave of absence from her teaching position to stay home with her children Laura tells me that although she strongly believes she deserves to stay home: "This is my present after my third child and putting my husband through college" (I2143-2144), at the same time, she explains that all she can think about was that she was how her decision would be perceived at school.

> There were several things going on when I was making this decision. One thing was "Oh, the poor kids in the school and I want to be with them" and the other thing is that I'm not a quitter . . . Anyway, I decided I was going to go back . . . I said, okay, I can do it. I'll go back, I can handle the stress. I didn't want to let the principal down and I did have my mom here. I didn't have any excuse (I2240-2263).

Kendra also mentions that she wants to be respected as a teacher. She states: "It's important for me to be viewed as a professional. I want to be seen that way by parents, students, the principal and fellow teachers" (WC#4). Maushart writes about how working mothers strive to "keep cracks in their armor from showing." They have grown up believing that they are not entitled to any special privileges; that motherhood is "not supposed to make a difference" (1999, p. 179). For mother teachers, this means expecting themselves to live up to the same expectations that teachers who do not have children at

home have for themselves. Although Kendra has no trouble asserting herself with respect to limiting the time she devotes to school, she does seem to resent the feeling that other teachers might be judging her for the decisions she makes. She tells me how she is able to leave school on time, unlike some of her colleagues who often work until early evening at school. She explains that these women have accused Kendra of being unfriendly for not wanting to mingle more.

> I love to teach. I meet all my deadlines. Everything gets done and I get to go home. I don't really compare myself to other teachers, but sometimes it just can't be helped. Especially in the case like on my team where comments have been made that I'm snooty. I'm a good teacher and I'm a good mom. I just wonder if the same things can be said about those people who spend their time judging others (I1539-1543).

Kendra continues, somewhat resentfully:

> I'm just as good a teacher as those of them who stay here all hours of the day. I may have to leave to get my kids at daycare, but you can be sure I've met all my deadlines and did everything I needed to do. The difference is, you see them huddled up in groups chatting during the day and I don't do that (WC#4).

Sometimes I was given the impression that the mother teachers actually enjoyed being told exactly what was required of them. Patricia says: "I know it seems like a lot, but believe me, it's better to know where your principal stands than not have any idea where she's coming from and not have a clue what she expects of you as a teacher" (I1791-1793). Cannella mentions the willingness of teachers to accept expectations for behavior when she talks about how the discourse of profesionalization of teaching not only has resulted in the perpetuation of patriarchy, but also generation of the desire and expectation to be told what to do and how to do it (1997).

All three teachers in this study are constrained by societal expectations for them at school. They live their lives conscientiously trying to meet expectations for them set by Principal Smith and seeking to be viewed as successful teachers in the eyes of their fellow teachers. Inevitably though their efforts fail at some time or another and they are

left with feelings of guilt and frustration for not having lived up to these expectations they so desperately feel that they need to meet.

Principal as Gatekeeper of Perks and Promotions

In addition to setting high expectations for the teachers, Principal Smith acts as a gatekeeper for perks and promotions, often giving preferential treatment to teachers with whom she has the best relationships. Although all three women taught in the same school and worked under Principal Smith, Patricia and Kendra experience preferential treatment by Principal Smith while Laura does not. Principal Smith uses, her power to make lives easier for her favorites and causes suffering for the others. As a result, participants in this study experience teaching as a politicized game of proving one's dedication to the principal. Canella writes about how the discourse of professionalism perpetrates the status quo by "creating conditions of control for those who define what it means to be a professional" (1997, p. 144). For teachers, this means that they are expected to "comply with the demands of school committees and boards, to yield to the control of 'superiors' and to control the behavior and learning of children" (Cannella, 1997, p. 142).

This sense of maintaining order as demanded by the superior certainly seems to be the case at the school in which these women taught. Principal Smith is seen by all three participants as someone who needs to be impressed in order to win her favor. These teachers recognize that they are in the midst of a high stakes game. Depending on how well teachers play the patriarchal game of "please the principal," they have the opportunity to gain not only perks and promotions from Principal Smith, but also risk Principal Smith using her power to make decisions that can damage their career.

Perks

Preferential treatment by Principal Smith was often given to teachers with whom she had the best relationship. Although all three teachers mothers complained to me about the amount of work that they felt required to accomplish, Patricia and Kendra both appeared to sense the significance of being seen in a positive light in Principal Smith's eyes and, as a result, attempt to mold themselves to fit her expectations as best as they were able. Both women mention that they never criticize Principal Smith for giving them additional responsibilities. Patricia writes in an e-mail: "I don't complain; I just don't" (WC#1) and Kendra says: "I don't complain . . ." (I1124). Kendra acknowledges that, with respect to Principal Smith, it is important to "stay on her good side" (WC#3). To do this, she tries to do as much as she can to help her. "She needs good team players and that's what I want to be" (I4157-4158).

Patricia maintains a good relationship with Principal Smith by completely acquiescing to any and all of Principal Smith's demands for her time. Patricia tells me that she sees her job as a support to both the teachers and Principal Smith. Because of this, she tries to be open to whatever is needed from her at school. She comments: "I'm here for the teachers and everyone is here for the principal, we work together . . ." (WC#3). Although additional responsibilities given to her are frequently outside of her contract duties and hours, Patricia says that she doesn't mind the extra work. Patricia, rather unconvincingly, explains how she didn't mind having had to, at the last minute, spend the day chaperoning a music field trip to a nursing home. "And it's worked out fine. I really don't mind." (I1797-1798). Although Patricia sometimes struggles with the expectations Principal Smith has for her and her fellow teachers, she has learned that it is best to be silent. As previously quoted Patricia says: "Sometimes, it does seem like I'm asked to do an awful lot. I don't complain . . . " (I2562).

Since Laura is originally from Argentina, it appears reasonable to assume that her attitude may differ in part due to cultural differences. She addresses this point at one of our interviews: “If I learned something about accommodating to this culture, it was about . . . being polite, asking for things, and asking for forgiveness- even if you don’t mean it” (I1838-1840).

Despite claiming that she has learned these things, Laura’s attitude toward authority differs greatly than the other two mother teachers in this study. Laura is much more vocal in sharing her discontent with Principal Smith that the other women. She sees everyone at school as working toward a common goal and therefore sees no problem with making suggestions or constructive criticisms.

> I’m very honest. I express concerns I have. Especially because it’s all about the kids. I mean, that’s why we’re here isn’t it? It’s better to just say what you’re thinking and then you can move on. I’ve learned that in therapy and it works for me (WC#1).

Unfortunately for Laura, although her technique of being honest works for her personally, it appears that she is viewed by her administrator as outspoken. As previously quoted, referring to Principal Smith, Laura explains: “She told me: “Ever since you came, you came with all these ideas, ‘I want this, I want that’” (I1817). Perhaps due to her honest and forward nature, Laura’s relations with Principal Smith have been less than positive. She isn’t able to clearly articulate what she may have done to aggravate Principal Smith, but she senses that for whatever reason, she and the principal have not always been on the best of terms. “I feel that some way or another I was either angry or I was unacknowledged or I did something wrong” (I1775).

Both Patricia and Kendra benefited from a friendly relationship with their principals- especially during their pregnancies. Kendra has always gotten along well with

her principals. During her first pregnancy she recalls having benefited from this friendly relationship and feeling extremely supported by administration. Kendra's principal encouraged Kendra to go home and rest during her two-hour break between her morning and afternoon sessions.

> I had a two hour break between morning and afternoon where it was my lunch time, planning time and just extra time because the kids didn't come, and . . . I could go home and sleep and come back for my afternoon. She was just that kind of principal. She was wonderful. She was very supportive (I290-294).

Patricia too has always enjoyed a close relationship with her administrators. In our first interview Patricia tells me about how amazed she was at the support she was given by Principal Smith and the teachers during her first pregnancies. She explains that the first time she was pregnant she was expecting twins. Late in the first trimester Patricia was crushed to hear that there was only one heartbeat and the week thereafter Patricia learned that she had lost the second twin as well. Patricia winces: "I was just devastated . . . " (I1162). Patricia was amazed at how supportive all of the teachers and Principal Smith were. "The miscarriage was hard. Just thinking about it I'd start crying. But they really pulled together and gave me lots of encouragement and love. It was really great" (I1139, WC#1).

When she found out that she was pregnant again, she was especially pleased that Principal Smith was so kind and understanding. Patricia says that she congratulated her and said: "I think that's great" (I1184). Patricia was particularly touched and appreciative that Principal Smith reassigned her duties outside of the classroom and that no other teachers seemed upset by this decision: "I didn't have duties in the morning or in the afternoon, but no one complained . . . (#1184-1185, WC#1). Patricia believes that this was because of her previous miscarriage and Principal Smith wanting to help ensure a

good pregnancy for her. Patricia pauses for a moment, then smiles and nods gently: "Yeah, I think she wanted to make sure" (I1198).

Some teachers are less successful at convincing their principal of their dedication to her and their worth to the school. Laura's tendency to challenge the system resulted in her being, as Cannella states, "placed in the margin" (1997, p. 145). Teachers living along the margins of mainstream schooling are not rewarded in the same manner as their more obedient colleagues. The discrepancies in how teachers are treated are readily apparent when comparing how Principal Smith treats Patricia and Kendra with compassionate understanding while Laura is left to languish. As mentioned previously, Laura, when she was in her third trimester of her pregnancy and feeling exhausted at the end of the day, asked Principal Smith if she could be allowed to stop tutoring after school. Her request was not welcomed. Laura explains: "she didn't say 'no' but said that I should consider it bla bla bla" (I1296-1297). Laura says that the message from Principal Smith was clear; she did not want Laura to stop tutoring in the afternoons.

Promotions

Not only were the teachers who actively supported Principal Smith given preferential treatment and perks at school, but their actual careers were impacted by principal relationships. Promotions were keen moves made on Principal Smith's part to solidify particular teachers' loyalty and sense of obligation to her and the school as a whole. Accepting promotions further entrenched the teachers into the cycle of dedication expected of them.

Patricia is extremely appreciative of Principal Smith for having chosen her to fill the position of Campus Educational Technologist at her school. "I love being the CET. I enjoy setting up the computers and learning the software and teaching the teachers and students how to use them" (I2057-2059). Patricia is under the impression that her job is

easier than that of a classroom teacher. In fact, Patricia explains that it was only after she was awarded the promotion to Campus Education Technologist that she agreed with her husband that they should try and have a baby. Patricia says that the reduced stress load with her new position encouraged her to become a mother. Patricia's claim that she doesn't feel obligated to support Principal Smith because of this promotion rings slightly untrue. "I don't owe her or anything, but I want to show her that she made a good decision." (I2074-2075).

Principal Smith designed a new position funded by grant monies just for Kendra. Kendra is thrilled with her new job. "I'm honored she selected me. . . For her to think enough of me to do that, it means a lot . . . She values me as a professional" (WC#4). Kendra, like Patricia, does not intend on returning to teach in a classroom. As previously quoted, when asked if she would consider returning to teach first grade, she replies laughing: "Never. Drag me kicking and screaming" (I5031)! As a result, Kendra seems particularly eager to prove to Principal Smith that she made a good decision choosing Kendra for this promotion. "I want to do all I can for her. I love my new job and it's important to me to make sure I do it the best I can" (WC#4).

The consequences of reaping rewards given by Principal Smith have long lasting effects on how the teacher is able to relate to their principal in the future. By accepting these promotions Patricia and Kendra backed themselves into a corner where they feel compelled to support Principal Smith and agree to any, and all, of her demands if they wish to remain in her good graces.

Unlike Patricia and Kendra, Laura has neither been unable to establish a good relationship with Principal Smith, nor does she feel that she has been able to demonstrate that she is a good teacher. "I know I'm good, but I just never get the chance to show it. It makes me very upset" (WC#3). Catherine Beecher's words from when she addressed

Congress in 1853 still ring familiar regarding expectations for teachers today. She maintained that "domesticity, self-sacrifice, and submissiveness" were the characteristics inherent in females which made them particularly suited to teaching children in schools (Cannella, 1997, p. 141). Even today, teachers who do not exhibit these characteristics are less able to establish a good rapport with their principal and are at risk of being ostracized and sometimes, as is the case with Laura, demoted. Laura explains that, without any explanation, Principal Smith informed her that she would be moved down a grade. Laura recognizes that she has not been the team player Principal Smith would have liked her to be, and suspects this demotion may be the result of not having been successful in establishing a good relationship with Principal Smith: "I know I don't have a good relationship with my principal and it's hurting me now" (WC#3).

Cannella writes that teachers who disagree with the dominant regime are taught that they may never call into question the patriarchal function of schooling. Instead they are to "blame their own intellect, motivation, or effort" (1997, p. 143). This is reflected in Laura's comment where she uncharacteristically refrains from criticizing Principal Smith and comments that she isn't sure what she may have done wrong in order to be demoted: "I'm not sure what I did or didn't do" (WC#3).

Principal Smith wields her power in a conscious and deliberate manner, essentially acting as the gatekeeper of all perks and promotions at the school. In this study, all three mother teachers describe various ways that they seek to demonstrate to Principal Smith their ability to teach well and positively contribute to the school. Patricia and Kendra are most successful in their efforts; not only are they recognized for their hard work and efforts, but Principal Smith promotes them to non-homeroom teaching positions. Laura, on the other hand, is not successful in her attempts to prove her worth. Laura recognizes the need to be seen positively by Principal Smith, but unlike her

colleagues, is unwilling to let herself be pushed around for this to occur. As a result, rather than being promoted as Patricia and Kendra are, Laura is instead demoted.

Expectations: Mothers

In her research, Dinnerstein recognizes the difficulty mothers face in their efforts to combine a committed career with family life. She details that it is the woman's responsibility to "devise strategies that make it all work" (1992, p. 184). The responsibilities of teaching children long hours at school and then returning home to find oneself responsible for a family is a daunting challenge, in particular because of expectations for mothers are deeply ingrained within our society. Contemporary vision of motherhood has been shaped by collective memories and historical images (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 45) and reflect the orientation of white, middle class, heterosexual men. Collins writes, "Institutions, paradigms, and other elements of knowledge validation procedure controlled by elite white men constitute the Eurocentric masculinist validation process" (1990, p. 203). Therefore, despite the fact that many mothers work outside of the home, motherhood remains shaped by, and tied to, an antiquated ideology of the nuclear family (Jetter, 1997).

Dinnerstein (1992) describes how the intransigence of gender roles within families, in particular with respect to what she calls nurturing, causes struggles for women. "The family remains, in fantasy, if not in reality, the place where nurturance takes place and where women - despite all the expansion of their roles outside the family - are considered by themselves and others as responsible for that nurturing" (p.182). Sometimes the battles the mother teachers fight about nurturing are with others and sometimes they are within themselves.

For Patricia, the struggle she most frequently faces is at home with her husband. Patricia resents the fact that, although she is happy with how she manages her

responsibilities of mothering and teaching, her husband is not only unhappy, but frequently voices his concern. “He is not happy with the time I put in at school. He thinks I should be home more with Kyle” (WC#4). Patricia explains that her husband often feels compelled to remind her that she needs to be “here with your son” (I2136). Thus, in order to keep the peace in her home, Patricia can not simply make decisions in her life with the intent of meeting her goals as a mother and teacher, she must also be aware of the how her husband will react to decisions she makes. She describes how she adjusts her decisions according to how he might respond. If she doesn’t do this she needs to prepare for battle. “I just think to myself, is it worth it? I used to go to all the evening events, now I choose to stay home a lot of the time” (WC#5).

The expectations Kendra faces in her home life and with which she personally struggles are partially self-imposed. Kendra fights an internal battle. On one hand, she embraces the traditional mother role with the accompanying expectations and expects herself to live the traditional life of a homemaker. As previously shared, Kendra states: “The Bible has clear guidelines for both mothers and fathers; my husband and I take these very seriously. God set it up a certain way. The man is the head, the woman is the help and that’s how our house functions . . .” (WC#2). Yet at the same time, Kendra admits that she loves working outside the home and, as quoted in a previous section, she doesn’t think she could ever be at stay at home mother. “I think I work for my sanity. I always thought I’d like being a stay at home mom, but these last couple of weeks has made me doubt that” (I3940-3941). Not surprisingly, Kendra has trouble reconciling how she feels with how she thinks she is supposed to feel. “Sometimes I just feel torn between the two. There just doesn’t seem to be enough time to do both as well as I’d like” (WC#2).

At the same time that teachers are pulled toward their children at school, they are also made to feel by society that, as mothers, they should be at home with their children. Lightfoot explains that for woman, "it has been her ability to supervise a household, have a happy marriage, and bring up well-behaved children that has served as the real justification for a women's life rather than her success and satisfaction in her profession" (1978, p. 68). Thus, one particularly complicated issue for mother teachers is leaving their children to go teach other women's children. Rutherford describes this struggle when she writes: "I was spending so much time and energy with other people's children and not my own" (1999, p. 56). Often these struggles are not because the women feel as if their choice of child care is not a good one, but rather it is because they either feel they themselves should be providing the care, or they feel badly or jealous about not being the one who is taking care of their own child during the day.

Ever since becoming a mother, Kendra has struggled with guilty feelings with leaving her children in the care of other women. As I have previously shared, she recalls leaving her baby with her great-grandmother for the first time and feeling miserable and jealous: "I knew she was being showered with love and attention all day long. But then, I was like, 'I want to do that" (I342-344). Now that her daughters are older, Kendra struggles with how much her kids enjoy day care. Kendra has been frustrated with how both of her children have, on several occasions, not wanted to leave day care when she has come to pick them up in the evenings. Referring to the occasion when her daughter insisted that she was going to home with her teacher Miss Marsha, Kendra notes: "They were attached . . . She had her all the time . . . I mean, this is the person she's with all day long, so I can understand that . . ." (WC#2). Kendra sighs, "But I was hurt" (WC#2). I could tell that Kendra still harbored guilty feelings five years old when, although she has always told me she would never want to be a stay at home mom, she mentions that, if she

and her husband have another baby, she would take the time to be home with a baby: “I think when I have a baby I will need to stay home because I think I should be home with a baby and I missed that with my girls” (I3942-3943). Middle class society expects mothers to be selfless, not just to care about their families above themselves, but also sacrifice themselves by dedicating their lives to them (Kaplan, 1992; Lightfoot, 1978). Kendra recognizes that society expects her if at all possible to put her employment on hold and stay home with a baby.

In some manner or another, all of the women struggle with the intransigence of gender roles within their lives. Visions of good mothers reflect the orientation of white, middle class men and have little to do with the realities in the lives of these mother teachers. Although they work as teachers from early morning to early evening, they still must get up in the mornings and get their own children ready to begin their days and in the evenings return to their children and their husbands. These women are thus expected to use the morning and evening time they have with their children to fulfill the myriad of expectations for them as good mothers set for them by society, husbands, and themselves..

Guilt

Feelings of guilt pervade the lives of the mother teachers in this study. In speaking with them, I sensed that filling the roles of mother and teacher provides challenges that are seemingly impossible to overcome without feeling burdened with sensations of responsibility and guilt.

The intensity of teacher-student relationships, in particular due to the unequal caring nature of the relationship between teacher and student, can be overwhelming for teachers (Leavitt, 1994 cited in Goldstein and Lake, 2000). I suspect that the low SES

levels of the students has something to do with the particularly strong pull of the mother teachers toward their students.

Kendra shares:

> These kids are really needy, really. They need so much more than just a good teacher. I worry about them getting enough food, whether people are watching them at home, are they safe, is someone in jail, do they have pencils to do their homework. It's just the way things are and it takes a lot out of me, believe me . . . they tell me things that are going on at home and you know, it tugs at my heart (I967-971, 2580-2583).

Patricia feels similarly:

> The thing is, they need me a lot more than my son does. Not that he doesn't need me, of course he does. But a lot of times these kids don't go home to much at all. I'm what they've got and I have to split myself between 25 kids or so, so that's not a lot (WC #4).

For all three of the women in this study, the most difficult thing about their efforts to reconcile expectations they feel obligated to fulfill from each of their roles has been the guilt that they sense in response to choosing the responsibilities of one role over the other. According to Hargreaves and Tucker, guilt is "a central preoccupation" for teachers. They note that mother teachers often worry that they may be putting the needs of their children in front of those of their students (1991, p. 494). Laura gave an example where she mentioned feeling guilty for wanting to put the needs of her family in front of those of their students. After having her third baby she wanted very much to take a leave of absence from her teaching position mid-year, but didn't feel right about leaving her kids at school without a teacher. "I just felt so bad. The kids loved me and they knew I had the baby and were waiting for me to come back. How does that make them feel if I just don't" (I2382-2382)?

However, Laura's example of feeling guilty for wanting to sacrifice her students on behalf of her children was the only example in this study where a teacher expressed concern that her students were being sacrificed due to her making a decision that

benefited her children at home over her students at school. Throughout the rest of this research project, the mother teachers consistently demonstrated that they put the needs of their students in front of those of their children.

Sacrificing mothering for their job seems to be a particularly complicated issue for teachers because they are having to choose between children. Other women's children, then, are taking time and energy away from one's own children. Since the demands of these roles often coincide, mother teachers often struggle with feeling overwhelmed and overburdened (1999). In Dinnerstein's study of mother teachers one of the participants speaks of this struggle as "cheating" between home and school. "The worst is the real stress and guilt you feel for the hours that are spent away from the family. That is still the worst. It is always feeling like it is a compromise, that it is never a solution, that you are still cheating one for the other . . ." (1992, p. 157). Just like the women in this research study, Dinnerstein's study participant admits that she feels that the demands of her students come before the needs of her family: "and I still feel like I cheat the family" (1992, p. 157).

It is no surprise then, that feeling guilty about decisions made in attempts to integrate work and home were the focal points of many conversations with study participants. Many of these decisions had to do with how the mother teachers choose to divide their time at school and home.

Patricia explains that since she has taken over as the CET position, her days have gotten longer. Despite looking forward to being home with her son in the evenings, Patricia explains that she is only occasionally able to leave when she'd like: "On some days I try to leave by 4:30 p.m. if I can- so I can be home to relieve my nanny by five. Sometimes it works . . ." (I1757-1758). Patricia's joy at leaving school on time is tarnished by guilt and charged with mixed feelings with wanting to be a visible presence

at school. Patricia shrugs and explains: “I feel a little, yeah, I do, I feel like if nothing else, I need be seen here at school. Even when I can go home on time I feel guilty. I mean, I want to go home and see Kyle, but at the same time I feel like I should be at school- be there for anyone who maybe could use my help. And that makes me feel guilty” (I1842-1845).

One of Kendra’s biggest struggles is how her teaching infringes on her life as a mother. She explains that last year she decided that she had had enough. She refused to let herself take work home because, as explains, she realized that “that’s my time for family” (WC#2). Now, however, since being moved up a grade level, she explains that she has no choice but to take work home again. “I just can’t get it all done at school. There’s just no way. But I sure feel bad about it” (WC#2). One of Hargreaves and Tucker’s study participants demonstrates a similar struggle when she says: “Teaching is a profession that you go home, you always have stuff that you think about. You think, ‘I should be doing this;’ and I feel guilty sitting down half the time” (1991, p. 494).

At our last interview after Kendra had been working as a Math Specialist for several months she explains that she doesn’t ever intend to return to the classroom as a classroom teacher. When I ask her why, she says that in her new position she reaps most of the benefits of teaching and few of the negatives aspects.

> I still have daily interaction with kids. And the co-teaching. So I get the joy of teaching, the true joy of teaching. I don’t have to grade; I don’t have to do all the . . . you know - lesson plans, conferences, attendance, phone calls, grading all of that stuff that a teachers has to do but really has nothing to do with whether you can teach a kids to read or not . . . And the best part is that I feel a lot less guilty! (I5079-5084; WC #1).

All aspects of the lives of the mother teachers in this study are saturated with feelings of guilt. The women are not only often physically absent from their children, but thoughts of their students often invade their lives at home. They feel frustrated with

having to choose between children and feel guilty sensing that they are sacrificing their own children on behalf of their students. Having their lives split between two competing roles with overlapping responsibilities inevitably results in feelings of guilt, irregardless of whether they choose home over school, or as more often happens, school over home.

Boundaries

Feelings of guilt, jealously and regret circulated over and over in conversations with study participants. In response to these mixed and conflicting emotions, the mother teachers searched for ways in which they could resolve the feeling that they sacrifice their children on behalf of their students. The women all describe having attempted to, or having thought about how to, blend the mothering and teaching aspects of their lives. However, such attempts were abandoned when they were given the impression that they were somehow acting, or would be acting, in an unprofessional manner.

Kendra gave an example of how, when her first baby was born, she tried blending responsibilities of her job with motherhood. As previously described, one week into the start of school while still on maternity leave, Kendra agreed to teach a teacher training workshop and took her month-old baby with her to the training. “It was just an informal workshop and I said, well shoot, she’s four weeks old and all she’s going to do is sleep, so I just took her with me” (I361-362). Kendra was surprised at the reaction of her fellow teachers. “Everyone’s like ‘I can’t believe you brought your baby! Oh, oh, oh’ ” (I363). After experiencing the uproar her decision made, Kendra quickly realized combining the two roles was not going to be something she could do. “It’s not like I had a problem with bringing my baby, but everyone else seemed so surprised that I did that” (WC#1). Recognizing that blending was not going to be possible, she reasoned that since she had already missed the first week of school she saw no need to miss any more and cut her

maternity leave short. She recalls thinking, 'What's the point? . . . Oh well, it's so much easier to come in and get started than it is to come in a week later" (I372-373).

Laura believes that her current inability to blend mothering and teaching has been the fault of Principal Smith and an unsupportive atmosphere at school. Laura explains that she was teaching in a different school when her other two children were born and was able to nurse both of them during her planning period for fourteen months.

> I did really good breastfeeding with both of my other kids- for 13 and 14 months- working full time . . . They brought the baby to me, that was with Juan, and sometimes I just took my milk out and they gave it to the baby . . . It really worked well for me (I2206-2207, I1514-1515).

She credits this success in large part to the administrators at her school being so receptive to her husband or mother bringing the baby to her classroom during planning time so that she could nurse. "They were just really good about it. The principal never had a problem with me breastfeeding at school" (WC#4). It has been the experience with her third child that has been dramatically different. Laura explains that her new school does not have the same type of supportive atmosphere. Because of this lack of support, she has had trouble deciding how long of a maternity leave she should take with her third child. Although she wanted to ask Principal Smith if, upon return from her maternity leave, she might be permitted to return to her house just two blocks away to breastfeed her baby during her planning or lunch time, her poor relationship with Principal Smith convinced her she shouldn't bother asking. "I was very hesitant because of the atmosphere of the school- that it was too demanding, too stressful" (I2207-2208).

Expectations for mother teachers and the accompanying pressures from school and home, as well as failed attempts at blending these two roles resulted in all of the participants resorting to drawing boundaries between their school and home lives in attempts to pacify their guilty consciences and gain some sense of peace.

Patricia explains that she has divided her life in response to her husband's aggravation with her school life encroaching on their family life. Patricia writes in en e-mail:

> To help cut down on our discussions about my work and how it invades our home life, I have divided my life up into teacher time and mommy or wife time. I don't go to evening activities like I used to because that is no longer my school time. It's helped Emil feel better so I guess that's what counts"(WC#5).

Laura gives the details of her plan of separation of school from home. Because she has been feeling so overwhelmed with school, she has decided to "take one day at a time" (I2066). She describes how she works hard every minute at school and avoids mixing her home life into her school life.

> I don't mix the two . . . I used to make phone calls home, now I don't . . ." (I2066, 1924). She explains the reasoning for her decision: "I care very much when I'm there, but that's it . . .That's the best way to live your life or otherwise you go crazy (I2066-2067, 2072).

It was particularly interesting that all three women struggled with perceptions of how they were going to handle the logistics of dividing their lives once their children began school. Patricia wonders how her future teaching career will mesh with motherhood in the school system in which she currently works. She often imagines what it will feel like if she is teaching at Kyle's school when he begins kindergarten. She mentions that she would like to teach in the same school that her son attends, but that she can't imagine how that would work. She looks a bit sad and explains:

> I was just thinking, I could just see my principal's reaction if I said "I need to go have lunch with Kyle in the cafeteria." You know, I really hope I could do it when the time came. But I can see it would be one of those things that's just not professional. So I'd go to the PTO meeting but I couldn't go to lunch (I4106-4107, 4112-4113).

Kendra's older daughter is about to start her first year of school and despite having taught several years of kindergarten herself, Kendra is beginning to feel the

nervousness that many parents of her own students have probably felt on their child's first day of school. Kendra has decided that she absolutely has to walk her child to her classroom the first day of school. The only problem is, her daughter will be attending a public magnet school about ten minutes away from her school and this means that Kendra will be late on her own first day of school.

> My principal doesn't know it yet, but I'm not going to be at work until about 8:15 a.m. on the first day of school . . . She doesn't know her teacher, her teacher doesn't know her . . . I'm going to take her to her teacher, meet the teacher. I'm not going to hang out for an hour, but I need to make sure that she gets to the right place . . . I just can't drop her off at 7:15 a.m. and be on my merry way (I4116-4124).

Like Patricia and Kendra, Laura also wonders about how her career as a teacher will mesh with her mothering once her children begin kindergarten. Explaining how she has been fretting about the future a lot recently Laura explains:

> I'm asking myself too many questions . . . I really want to have a clear picture of the future and where I want my kids to go to school and . . . what I could do best as a teacher and as a mother to them. For example, should I teach in a school where they're gonna go? Does it matter where I teach? I think it does, because I want to see them. That was one of the advantages of being a teacher (I975-981).

Since Laura does not want her children attending the school where she is now employed as a teacher, but would very much like to teach at the school they attend, she recognizes: "that means I have to teach at a different school, get a different job" (I980).

All three of the mother teachers had had teacher mother relatives in their lives growing up who, according to accounts of the study participants, had successfully blended the mothering and teaching component of their lives. The recollections these women have of their relatives' careers tend to revolve around how they excelled at balancing all of the responsibilities in their lives and, in particular as is the case with Patricia and Laura, the love their mother teacher relatives had for their students. Because of these descriptions, it was particularly surprising to me that the study participants did

not mention any connection between their own attempts to balance these aspects of their lives with how their relatives had successfully done this.

Since I was employing an interview technique of emergent interviewing which allows the participants to lead conversations and the interviewer only to ask for clarification of comments made by the participants, I refrained from asking how their female relative's experiences influenced their own outlook on motherteachering. In retrospect, I believe that I could have been able to gain this information without compromising the technique of emergent interviewing had I been more probing in my follow up questions. I regret not having done so, in particular because since Patricia and Laura's teaching relatives were not only alive, but women with whom they had frequent contact. It would have been especially interesting to meet with my participants and their female mother teacher relatives to discuss this topic.

In one of our first interviews Kendra says that her grandmother was both a teacher and a mother. In a follow up e-mail Kendra describes how her grandmother was probably influenced by mothering and teaching in ways which Kendra had previously never been aware. "She was very organized; good at managing several things at the same time. I never really made the connection before, but now that I think about it, having taught myself, I bet she got that from teaching" (WC#1).

Patricia grew up in a family of teachers. Not only did her mom teach elementary school, all of her aunts did as well. Upon graduation from college Patricia's older sister joined the elementary teaching profession. Patricia recalls how she and her sister would often spend time in her mother's classroom while they were growing up.

> I always helped my mom get her room ready every year . . . We would play classroom when we were kids. We would put together a fake roll and pretend to call out and do little lesson plans and write on the chalkboard (I334-354).

Patricia recalls that her mom always seemed organized and good at being both a teacher and a mom. “Honestly, I don’t remember her having trouble balancing things. She enjoyed her job and was still a good mom. Anyway, both her daughters became teachers, that must say something about her doing a good job” (WC#2)

In our online journal Laura had a lot to share about how she saw her mother integrating mothering with teaching and vice versa. Laura’s mother began teaching as a substitute teacher and took her first full time position when Laura was in elementary school. Although Laura and her sisters did not attend the elementary school where their mother taught, she “always made us participate in her school life” (WC#1). Laura describes how she used to help her mother with her students.

> I used to help my mom since very young. Grade papers and . . . From the time she taught students about my same age I remember she would bring then home as a treat and we would have something like an informal party full of games” (WC#1). Laura recalls how loving her mother was toward her students: “She was a big loving mom for every child around . . . She was great at showing the same care and warmth she would have for us to her students (WC#1).

It was surprising to me that although all of the women detailed having observed their teacher mother relatives having had good experiences with mothering and teaching, they seemingly never thought much about how their own impressions of mothering and teaching had been influenced by these women. It was almost as if the participants’ impressions of their female relatives not having had any trouble prevented the mother teachers from further evaluating their own situations carefully and recognizing the disparities in their own lives. Perhaps they thought that since their relatives had been able to handle balancing these two roles they surely could as well.

Every mother in this study searched for ways in which they could blend the dual aspects of their lives. Having unsuccessfully been able to achieve this goal, in response to pressure to meet societal expectations for them as mothers and teachers, the women

resorted to drawing boundaries between these two aspects of their lives in order to ease their guilty consciences and live lives with some sort of balance.

INTRODUCTION: CONTRADICTIONS

In this research study all three participants state that they believe that teaching is a good job for mothers. As already shared, Kendra said: "I'm a family person and teaching is conducive to that" (WC#1). At the same time, they go on to confess their struggles with mothering and teaching and, when describing the events from their daily lives, instead of painting a picture of how their lives flow seamlessly from one set of responsibilities to the other, they instead depict their lives as ones filled with conflict, unease and guilt. Reading only the descriptions they give from their lives, and not their initial statements where they claim that their lives run smoothly, one would assume that teaching, as played out in their lives at least, is not a family friendly profession at all.

I have identified six categories where the participants' positive statement about the situations of their lives are in conflict with the multiples examples the women themselves give of lives filled with guilt and struggles. These categories are: loving to teach, loving to mother, having supportive husbands, mothering and teaching fitting well together, how drawing boundaries eases their struggles, and how administrators are to blame for their unhappiness at school. In this next section I will describe how, for each of these categories, there exists a discord between how they describe their lives, and how their lives are lived out. The contradictions and as well as the meanings behind them are important to examine. Also, since the teachers' own impressions of their lives clashes with how their lives are experienced on a day to day basis, it is significant to consider that if I had not conducted multiple interviews with each woman over an extended period of time, I probably would never had recognized these contradictions. This is because I would have not have likely been able to gather the numerous examples from their daily

lives which alerted me to the fact that their initial statements were in conflict with how their lives were lived out.

Contradictions: Loving to Teach

Participants all shared with me briefly that they enjoy their jobs and love to teach. The problem that I have believing this to be true is that the stories that follow these statements indicate otherwise. Instead of reaffirming their love of teaching, their words reveal anxieties and guilt. Their enjoyment of teaching seems to be overshadowed by the stresses of teaching in an atmosphere filled with pressure and expectations.

All of the participants in this study claim to enjoy their jobs as teachers. Patricia writes: "Teaching works out well for me as a mom. I worked hard to get where I am and I'm proud of being a teacher" (WC #1). Patricia mentions how her personality meshes well with her job as a teacher: "I naturally try and help people . . . I guess I'm more of a supportive person and I draw on that in my teaching" (I1918). Kendra enjoys knowing that she has made a difference in the life of a child: "I love the light that comes on. When a child comes and they can't read, when they read that first book- Like, 'I did it!' You know, and I'm thinking, 'Yeah, because I helped'" (I1534). Laura's description of teaching in the classroom indicates that she truly enjoys her chosen profession:

> I am a very nurturing person and I like to share that with my students. I enjoy very much teaching them, seeing the learning and sharing the world with them . . . I think that I have it good. I'm good at my job and I enjoy being in the classroom with the kids"(WC#2, I831-832).

Reading these statements, one would expect that in the conversations I had with these women, I would have multiple examples to demonstrate how their love of teaching is lived out in their lives. It is rather disheartening to share that in searching for examples of how their enjoyment of teaching is reflected in their lives, I am unable to find any examples, other than the descriptions quoted above. Instead, the women only detailed

things they did not like about teaching and hinted about other jobs they might like to pursue. Patricia states:

> . . . you have to stay on your toes; it's just constant . . . The problem I face though is that teaching now a days is so much more than what I think it used to be. Now we're faced with huge discipline problems, grading and testing, it's a lot for teachers. . . . I want to try to get into administration . . . (I1938-1939, 1970-1971, 3824).

Kendra is very frustrated by the bureaucracy of schools and how the increasing demands on students results in increasing demands on her.

> Every year there's something else that I have to do . . . We're testing first graders. Now we're testing kindergarteners . . .And there's just always more and more stuff like that I could just do without . . . (I1518-1519, 1525, 1528-1529).

Kendra was recently moved up a grade level and has been shocked and overwhelmed at the extra amount of work that she is needing to do each day.

> Trying to plan for all these subjects and grade for all these subjects, and keep up with books and papers and workbooks for all – it's too much . . . hopefully in a couple if years I'll be doing something different (I2034-2036, 1887-1888).

Laura is very resentful of administrative expectations and lack of support for her in the classroom. She feels completely overwhelmed and unappreciated. She complains that she has recently been criticized by Principal Smith and then a curriculum planner stopped by. "She says, 'Do you have your journals?' And that is something I didn't do. They've been writing, but not in a place called 'Journal.' I just didn't have time to train them. Show me how and I'll do it" (I2081-2083)! Laura explains that this type of interaction is what makes her regret her decision to become a teacher.

> Sometimes I think I made a mistake trying to teach . . . One part of me is like, no matter how much you give there is always going to be someone chasing me saying you didn't do this, you didn't do that, whatever. Instead of saying, 'you did really good with this.' So one part of me is, not sarcastic, but numb. The system is not going to recognize what I do, no matter how much I work (I968, 2188-2121).

It appears that the women want to enjoy teaching, it is just that the day to day logistics of the requirements of their job- discipline issues, grading and testing, as well as administrative mandates for instructional methods – are so overwhelming to them that the pressure and anxiety they experience while trying to meet these expectations prevents them from enjoying their jobs.

For each of these women, their joy of teaching rests outside the administrative realm. Patricia worked hard to become a teacher. She was previously in the business world and enjoys being more at ease in schools where she, rather than hiding them, can nurture the supportive aspects of her personality which she believes make her a better teacher. Kendra's love of teaching comes in small slivers of success as she successfully teaches concepts to individual students in her classroom. Laura enjoys spending time with the students in her classroom and seeing their learning. As a result, on closer examination, the things that aggravate these women so much about the teaching profession seem separate from what pulls them to the classroom. This would explain why they say that they love to teach but then seemingly contradict themselves. Unfortunately, the things that frustrate them so much about teaching, although they may be separate, have enough impact to make them forget what they love about teaching. This is indicated in their lack of giving examples of their love of teaching in their lives.

Contradictions: Loving to Mother

Participants also shared that they enjoyed their lives as mothers. Again, this became difficult to believe when their words focused almost entirely upon responsibilities they feel obliged to fulfill as mothers and the stresses they experience in wanting to be good mothers and provide for a solid and safe upbringing for their children. The discrepancies in their assertions and descriptions of their lives indicate that they may

very much want to love their teaching positions and their roles as mothers, but are unable to live out this desire due to the how their lives are currently constructed.

Surprisingly, the mother teachers in this study were very restrained when talking about their motherhood. Since they knew that this was something that interested me, I expected them to talk for hours about how wonderful their kids were and how much they enjoying being around them. This was not the case. Certainly there can be do doubt that the study participants love their children, but for some reason their words sound empty, almost as if they felt uneasy about showing the depth of their emotions. Laura tells me "I love being with the kids. I am their teacher at home" (I2212-2213). Kendra, while watching her kids swim one afternoon, comments: "I really do love them . . . They bring a unexpected joy into my life that I never would have known had I not become a mom" (I3856, 505-506). Patricia, the mother with the youngest child at the time, comes the closest of the three to bragging about her son when, in speaking about how her ten month old reacts when she returns home from work in the evening, says:

> He knows that I'm someone who's in his life . . . he smiles, he knows my voice, he knows me. . . He'll hear my voice and he'll crawl toward me. And he just smiles . . . he's just tons of fun. I'm enjoying him so much (I1905, 1910-1911, 1555).

I have considered whether the women refrained from speaking in more glowing terms about their children and mothering in general because they felt as if this was inappropriate in our interviews, but I really doubt that this was the case. I also thought that perhaps the women were more reserved when they were speaking about their children while on school property, but even at off-campus interviews, their words reveal the same distant tone. For example, one day at Laura's house when we are sitting in the backyard watching her kids play on the swing set. Laura sounds more like a therapist than a mom when she notes:

> Being a mom is very interesting to me. . . I've enjoyed having summer vacation with them and my husband . . . because we are not in a hurry to do this or do that . . . I can almost study my two sons better. I can see where they come from and I can still get angry anyway, but I enjoy more watching the process and see how they are developing (I1601, 1720-1722).

All three women express turmoil about whether they are fulfilling their responsibilities as mothers to their children. For Kendra, one of her biggest stresses is feeling like she needs to cook a good dinner in the evenings before her husband returns from work.

> I have to get dinner . . . we're not McDonalds people. My daughter, of course, loves McDonalds. But I'm like, I can't give you McDonalds for dinner every night. What are you thinking? . . . You gotta eat. And if you're gonna eat, I've got to cook (I1166-1168, 1170-1172).

Kendra explains that she also feels guilty for having been away from her daughters all day, and possibly not giving them the attention they need. "I just never really know. They're there all day and I just have them such a short time. Do they get all they need from me in that time? I hope so" (I4688-4690). She describes how her youngest daughter's behavior as of late has made her wonder. Kendra will be trying to cook dinner and her eighteen month old daughter hanging on her leg clamoring for her mother's attention.

> Right in the middle of my cooking, she wants to be held . . . that's where my guilt comes in. . . She doesn't care what I'm doing or where I've been. She has not been with me all day and now she wants to be with me. She didn't ask for a mother that worked. That was something we did . . . And I've been away from her all day, the least I can do is give her that (I1193, 1218, 1220-1222).

"Good" mothers, according to societal impressions, are completely devoted to their children's care and well being (Hays, 1996). Society considers work and family as oppositional. As such, gains for women outside their roles as wife and mothers are believed to come at the expense of women's children and husbands (Dinnerstein, 1992). Kendra clearly recognizes she is not fulfilling societal obligations of her as a good mother

when she makes dinner in a frantic state with a toddler hanging onto her leg. She has fallen prey to invisible gender constructs that portray working women as self oriented. She feels badly believing that her choosing to work outside the home is making her daughter miserable and questions whether she has made the right choice. It is important to note that she is only questioning whether she has made the right choice, she is not looking at societal expectations for mothers and questioning whether these are fair for her or questioning how her life might be different if her husband were at home in the evenings to share in the work of the kids and household.

Patricia explains that although she doesn't have a problem with how she deals with responsibilities in her life, she is resentful of how her husband makes her feel guilty about how she chooses to mother their son.

> I get awfully frustrated sometimes. If I had the choice to choose between staying home or working I'd choose working, but it's not so easy. I feel like sometimes I'm expected to act a certain way as a mom and sometimes I just don't feel that way . . . I know Emil doesn't. . . .When I work late I get a guilt trip. And of course, I tell him, you're giving me a guilt trip and I don't appreciate it. . . But I still feel bad (I2136-2138, 2140, 2239-2240, 1823).

It seems to me that Patricia and Kendra are under severe pressures because of expectations surrounding their mothering. Patricia is living with the feeling that her husband doesn't think she is a good enough mother and Kendra is struggling to meet expectations she believes are required of her. As for Laura, although she tells me that she "loves being with the kids," her words indicate that she enjoys relating with them as a teacher, or a therapist, but not in the more traditional western societal view of a mother (I2212-2213).

Contradictions: Supportive Husbands

Study participants all shared that they had husbands who supported them in their goals to mother and teach. Research on husbands' support of their wives has focused on

equity on task sharing and how this reduces the woman's sense of feeling overwhelmed (Lee and Duxbury, 1998). Another strand of research has focused upon the emotional support from partners and demonstrated that parents are less likely to feel overburdened by competing work and family responsibilities if they have emotionally supportive partners with liberal sex role attitudes (Lee and Duxbury, 1998).

While the participants in this study claim to have husbands that are supportive of their mothering and teaching and husbands who are understanding and flexible about household responsibilities, descriptions from participant's home lives reveal their husbands in a different light- as unresponsive to their struggles and often unreasonable in their demands. Since spousal support for women is a significant factor in how mother teachers are able to handle the responsibilities of their roles, it is important to examine the contradictions between how the mother teachers claim that they are supported by their husbands but give mostly indications to the contrary.

Patricia, with pride tells me that she and her husband have a strong relationship.

> I've always felt that we've had a even relationship. We don't fight about household chores or anything. We support each other and work well as a couple . . . We waited a long time after getting married to have a baby and things worked themselves out that way during those years (I2192-2195).

Kendra assures me that her husband "isn't lazy by any stretch of the imagination" (I1688-1689). She explains that, especially since this year has been so difficult for her, he is starting to help out more at home. "I think it's because he's seen what a toll it's made on me some days." In response to my comment: "Teaching and Mothering?" Kendra adds: "yeah, yeah and coming home to cook" (I1677, 1685). Laura explains that since she has been the only wage earner for the past three years while her husband was a student, he had to get used to keeping the house and watching the children. "I've been supporting

him for three years and during that time he had to do a lot around the house and with the kids. It was really good" (I2258-2259).

Neither Patricia nor Laura mention any discussions with their husbands over household chores. I suspect that this has a lot to with the fact that in both homes the nanny takes care of many of the household chores and the cleaning woman deals with most of the remaining ones. As for Kendra, she explains that, in their house, it is her responsibility as a woman to care for the home. "He just doesn't like housework . . . He just doesn't want to cook or clean" (I1693, 1701). Although she does admit that this does aggravate her "that's what frustrates me sometimes," she insists that they both believe the Bible sets up families in this manner "the man is the head, the woman is the help and that's how our house functions" (I2852-2853).

All three women are frustrated by their husbands not being able to relate to, or understand, their struggles with wanting to be good teachers and/or mothers. Patricia's husband doesn't agree with the amount of time that she devotes to her teaching position. When she is not obligated by contract to be at work, he would prefer that she be home with their son. "I feel like he expects me to be Supermom, or maybe just like his Mom. It's weird" (I2196-2197). As for Kendra, she explains that her husband doesn't understand how frustrated and guilty Kendra feels in the evenings when she needs to make dinner and the youngest daughter begins to clamor for attention. Kendra explains:

> The four year old is okay. She'll come home and she wants to watch cartoons, Cartoon Network or she wants to watch a video. Okay. But the eighteen month old, if I come home and don't sit down first, you know, sometimes you've got so much in your mind and you come home and I'm taking off my shoes and starting this and putting this in the defroster and I do that with her she is a mess. She can't handle that. She wants me. So, right in the middle of my cooking, she wants to be held . . . if you're rushing around she wants to be held . . . She's 's just mad, she's upset. She wants me to pick her up. And nothing is going to stop that until I pick her up . . . My husband's like, 'Well, just put her in there with her sister. She

> doesn't want to be in there, she wants to be in here with me. (I1186-1193, 1203-1204, 1213-1214, 1218-1219).

Kendra gives another example of how her husband has made himself emotionally unavailable for Kendra's struggles. Kendra is in the midst of trying to decide where to send her daughter to school the following year. Application deadlines are looming and Kendra needs to make a decision. She explains:

> It's kind of frustrating . . . I mean, my husband hasn't checked out or anything when it comes to the decision of which school is best, but he feels like 'you're the teacher, you know what need to be done and whatever you decide is fine with me. I'll support you' (I1372, 1447-1451).

Laura gives an example of her husband not understanding the depth of her sense of responsibility for her job. Laura says that she was feeling completely out of control of her life in preparation for her maternity leave. Upon expressing her anxiousness to her husband, Laura was aggravated by his nonchalant response:

> My husband is so very calm. Nothing really seems to bother him . . . My husband would tell me, "Don't worry, you are going to be having a leave of absence anyway." But for me, it was like, no I want to do as much as I can today . . . (WC#5, I1933-1934).

All three of the women appear to very much want their husbands to be supportive of their mothering and teaching as well as pitch in and share in the joys and responsibilities of household life. The problem is that, at least according to how they described every day lives with their husbands to me, this is not the case. Before their baby was born Patricia and her husband enjoyed an egalitarian marriage, but since the birth of their son things have changed. As for Kendra, it seems to me that her expectations for her husband participating in household chores and the emotional responsibilities of parenting children are so low, that she truly is happy when he occasionally "helps out." Laura and her husband seem to live disconnected lives. Laura's life, filled with unrest and questioning, seems to contrast starkly with that of her husband,

who is much more calm and composed. As a result, Laura's husband seems to have trouble relating to her ongoing inner turmoil and struggles in life.

CONTRADICTIONS: MOTHERING AND TEACHING FIT WELL TOGETHER

Surprisingly, all three participants were firm in their belief that mothering and teaching were two roles whose areas of responsibilities fit well together. Once again, in describing their experiences both at home and at school, participants indicated that this was not the case. The areas of responsibilities in mothering and teaching were often so similar in nature and overlapped so frequently that the women were forced to choose between their students and their children.

All three of the participants in this study claim that mothering and teaching are a good fit in their lives as mothers. Patricia explains why she feels this way:

> Being a Mom and teaching work fine for me. I enjoy what I do and having evenings and vacations free to be a Mom works just fine for me. Teaching is so much more flexible than other jobs would be. I usually stay, but if I wanted I could leave at 3:30 p.m. every day (I2175-2177).

As previously quoted, Kendra explains that she considers teaching flexible where other jobs would not be. "And teaching is a good job for me. On September 11th I drove over to my daughter's day care and brought her right back here with me. There aren't many jobs where you could do that" (I1337-1339). Laura explains that teaching is something she is good at and enjoys. "Teaching is a good job for me because it's what I'm good at and most of the time I like it. It works out well with being a Mom. And when I am in the right school and position things work out very well" (I838-839).

Most of the time though, the mother teachers give examples not of how mothering and teaching actually fit well into their lives, but rather how the two clash and make them feel torn between their responsibilities as mothers and teachers. In her work, Lightfoot describes how teaching is said to conflict with the mother's responsibilities at home,

which are seen by society as her primary responsibility. Society holds the impression that motherhood should be "the ultimate and inevitable extension of the women's role in society" (Lightfoot, 1979, p. 62).

For Patricia, the issue of time is the greatest struggle between her two roles.

> I was here this morning at 6:45 a.m. and I mean, I was not near the first car in the lot . . . Usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays I stay at least until 4:30 p.m. to do after school trainings . . . then sometimes I work after school, teachers catch me. That's when I can take care of a lot of their problems . . . The only problem with that is it takes time away from what I could be spending with Kyle. It's not like he's old enough to complain, but I still feel bad (I1813-1814, 1649, 1758-1759, 1821-1823).

Patricia says always having the sensation that she is having to choose the responsibilities of one job over the other makes her unhappy.

> Even when I can go home on time I feel guilty. I mean, I want to go home and see Kyle, but at the same time I feel like I should be at school- be there for anyone who maybe could use my help. And that makes me feel guilty (I1842-1845).

Constructed within a discourse of professionalism, methods for regulating teacher behavior have emerged from curriculum reform movements. They have replaced the need to read educational materials and foster one's self-identity as a teacher with labor intensive mandates such as turning in detailed lesson plans to administrators, requiring frequent numeric grading of stacks of papers, and the need to cover skills which will be tested in standardized testing (Cannella, 1997). Thus, rather than being free to concentrate on teaching, teacher's lives are filled with "busy work" to keep them under control. Kendra frets about the limited amount of time that she has in a day and the seemingly unlimited amounts of responsibilities required of her as a first grade teacher. She resents having to take work home from school.

> So, what happens is that there I am looking at that bag of papers that I need to grade and it's just not something I want to do. I want to get the house in order, do laundry, talk with my husband, relax. Even if I ignore the bag I still know it's there and that I should be doing the work (I891-893).

For Kendra, another challenge she has faced in her desire to combine mothering with a career as a teacher has been feeling as if she is over touched. Kendra is a teacher who hugs- often. I see her students hug her, older students whom she has previously had in class hug her, I have even seen students from the other class across the hall hug her. Kendra tells me that she never expected that being such a physical person would result in a struggle with combining her mothering and teaching lives. Although she explains that it doesn't bother her as much as it did a few years ago, she still sometimes feels over touched.

> It was kind of a surprise at first and it still catches me off guard. I just get over touched . . . I'm a touchy feeling person, and I guess I emitted that or something because when I'd sit down to do circle time or center time somebody was always right on me, or if I was sitting in a chair to read, somebody was always rubbing my leg . . .then I'd go home and I'd have my own baby who I wanted to love and hug all evening, then I had a husband who's also touchy-feely and I'm like, 'You know what? I've been touched enough today' and I'm like 'I want you to go over there and you to go over there and I just want to sit right here like this' . . . I felt like I was being over stimulated. I had way too much tactile going (I395, 402-405, 407-408).

Along similar lines, Kendra feels burdened by having to be a mom to so many kids in her classroom.

> I feel like I'm the mom to 23 kids all day long. And you know, they're emotionally pulling on you. They want this, they need to tell you that somebody scraped his knees, somebody, you know, it's like having your own 2 or 3 kids at home but it's 23 all day long" (I2574-2576).

Laura explains that she is frustrated about how the politics in teaching make her ability to combine mothering and teaching so difficult. She senses that her opinions do not mesh well with school administration and isn't sure about her future in education.

> Sometimes I don't think it is ever going to work with me teaching . . . I always wanted to be a teacher because I like the ideas of empowerment, but I've been feeling really, really down about that- about doubting my choices . . . I just don't agree with so many things happening in the schools . . .I'm just thinking of other options. I don't want to throw everything away . . . I would like to maybe teach

> adults or do something different. But then I think it's unfair, that if I leave because it was too much pressure. How can I teach teachers? It would be asking them to do things that I cannot do. That's why I say I have to stick with it and I have to do it (I965, 948-949, 965-966, 957-959).

She continues, lamenting the demands being put upon her as a teacher:

> It's just too much. I need to go home when school is finished and live my other life, but they always want more . . . I enjoy my family and our activities together. Why should I spend my evenings working on lesson plans or grading papers with my kids in the next room asking where I am (WC#3)?

Referring to district administrators coming to evaluate her campus, she explains: "They don't remember the pressure of being in a classroom and wanting to have everything ready. Especially someone like me who wants to work in school not outside of school" (I1922-1923).

These statements indicate that, rather than teaching being a "flexible" job as Patricia states, or "extremely conducive" to being a family oriented person as Kendra insists, the participants instead describe conflict between their responsibilities as mothers and those for them as teachers and feel guilty when they are forced to choose the responsibilities of one job over the other.

Contradictions: Drawing Boundaries Eases Struggles

In a somewhat contradictory fashion with prior statements indicating that mothering and teaching are a good blend with one another, the women admitted that they at times struggle with choosing between school and home and describe how they use boundaries to separate these two spheres of their lives to assist them in making decisions regarding when to choose one sphere over the other, in particular when the demands of each clash. This is an important area to consider since researchers on the subject of mothers and teachers have previously noted that the similarities of the two roles lead to the ideal blending of responsibilities (Grumet, 1988), and drawing lines of division

separating these spheres seems to contradict previous literature on the subject of balance in the lives of mother teachers.

In the book Balancing Acts, Gieve writes about how women with children tend to compartmentalize their lives into domestic and public spheres (1989). In response to the struggle with conflicting expectations, the mother teachers all describe how they too have drawn boundaries in their lives to help guide them in choosing between these spheres.

Patricia explains that she divided her life in response to her husband's concern that she is spending too much time at work. "To help cut down on our discussions about my work and how it invades our home life, I have divided my life up into teacher time and mommy or wife time" (WC#5). Another thing that helps Patricia separate her school and home lives has been their ability to hire a good nanny. Patricia says that having a nanny allows her to relax and concentrate on her teaching while at school since she knows that her son is well cared for.

> I try to concentrate on my responsibilities wherever I am. At school I may think about Kyle, but my job is my main focus . . . Our nanny is really great. I know he's well cared for and that lets me relax at school and do my job. When I am at home I can concentrate on him and what need to be done at home . . . I try not to fret about school while at home . . . (I1873-1876, 1561-1562).

Kendra prides herself on how her organizational skills help her avoid blending her two separate worlds of mothering and teaching. She explains that she has honed her skills on efficient use of time.

> I've learned to be very efficient. It doesn't take me very long to do anything . . . I've learned to conserve steps. Everything I need to take to the office or run copies of is right in one stop and I pick it up when I go out and I make my rounds. I meet all my deadlines. Everything gets done and I get to go home (I1138-1140, 1156-1158, 1539-1540).

At home Kendra is also organized and efficient: "All those grocery trips. It's like, let me plan this so I don't cross. I've got to go here, here, and here and then we'll make a circle and we'll come back home" (I1158-1160). Another technique Kendra uses to

separate her school and home live is refusing to stay long hours or work weekends, although she admits that she will stay late to avoid having to take work home:

> "I'm not giving up 9 to 1 on Saturdays . . . I don't stay late and I don't work on weekends . . . I try not to take work home . . . sometimes it means staying at school an extra thirty minutes or an hour . . . then that's what I do . . ." (I2770, 353-354, 350-351). Refusing to stay the long hours at school that other teachers might is a sensitive subject for Kendra. She assures me, "Everything gets done, but I'm not here late. I don't do that. I don't do that. I don't. And if you have a problem with it, get a husband and some kids and see. It'll be different. Yeah, it'll be different" (I1163-1165).

Laura shares with me how, as a result of becoming so overwhelmed with work, she divides her life into separate spheres. As I previously shared, Laura told me: "I tell you, I'm going to take one day at a time. To tell you the truth, I really don't care. I care very much when I'm there, but that's it" (I2066-2067). Laura explains that this technique works well for her because she doesn't like to take school work home. She wants "to work in school not outside of school" (I1923).

Despite the participants' claims that drawing boundaries helps them feel more in control and at peace, the women all describe how miserable they feel. I suspect that drawing these strict lines of demarcation has made them even more aware of how torn they actually are between these two competing demands in their lives.

In her research with mother teachers, Abbey identifies how difficult it is for mother teachers to leave their children in the care of other women (1995). Kendra shares that, even though she enjoys her job and tries to separate her two roles, she feels guilt and tension for not staying home with her children.

> During the day sometimes I think about them while I'm at school, which I really try not to do because I want to be efficient and stay on task, but sometimes I can't help it . . . I still feel badly about leaving the girls in day care. I mean, I'm happy that they love day care so much, but sometimes it's hard for me. I just never really know . . . I don't know. I don't know what I'd rather sometimes (I2711-2712, 4687-4689, 3949-3950).

Although Kendra may be successful with refusing to grade papers or plan lessons while her daughters are awake, she is less successful at being able to limit her concern for her students to school hours. Elbaz (1992) writes about how the moral nature of the work of teachers is grounded in connections between them and their students. Kendra comments:

> I'm very nurturing in the classroom. And I think that's what tires me out so much. I think I get too involved personally . . . And then I feel guilty for wanting to put them out of my mind when I'm at home with my family (I2566-2570, 967-971).

Patricia explains that her struggles in separating home and school are due to the pressure and anxiety she experiences as a result of feeling that her husband thinks her divisions are not fair to their son. "It's Emil that makes me feel guilty. He tells me that I need to be home to see my son which makes me feel like I'm not a good mom" (I2148-2149). As the same time, that Patricia hints that she suspects that his concerns might possibly be valid. Patricia comments: "Kyle . . . adores his Dad. He'll go to him before he goes to me. I know it sounds like I'm kind of jealous; (pause) I'm okay. . ." (I2908-2916).

As previously mentioned, Laura's plan for dividing her life into school and home has not gone as well as she had hoped.

> I still suffered, even when I drew those lines. Because nothing really changed- it wasn't time as much as it was ME . . . It didn't work for me at all. I felt like I was trying to be two different people and that ended up making me feel confused about who I really am and uncomfortable about the situation (I2224-2226).

Laura is somewhat surprised, and annoyed, at the guilt she feels for refusing to do school work at home. As previously quoted, Laura shares: "I enjoy my family and our activities together. I don't understand why I feel guilty for wanting to go home and spend the evening doing what I want to do (WC#3)."

In their search for a solution to enjoying quality time with their families, the mother teachers have decided that, in order for this to occur, they must completely

dedicate themselves to their children while at home and completely dedicate themselves to their students and responsibilities as teachers while at school. The fact that this did not help them feel any better about their lives was frustrating to them. The inability of the mother teachers to feel good about having drawn draw boundary lines in their lives is due to the fact that patriarchal expectations for them as teachers and as mothers are in conflict. Rubin (1983) refers to this conflict as one in which "competing urgencies" (cited in Bascia and Young, 2001) battle for control.

The boundaries these women drew in their lives serve mainly to highlight the inequities between how their time and energies are spent and often result in them feeling worse for having drawn them in the first place. Journalist Alice Lesch Kelly writes about how the separation of roles most often leads to unintended consequences. "all the roles women juggle- employee, mother, wife- come crashing together as they try to separate from work, spend time with their children and reconnect with their spouses" (cited in Maushart, 2001, p. 117).

Contradictions: Administrators are to Blame for Teacher Unhappiness at School

The last contradiction that I noted in our conversations has been how the mother teachers mentioned that they blamed Principal Smith for overwhelming them with responsibilities, but almost as if they thought better of it, all changed their stories and took the blame upon themselves. This is an important idea to pursue since it raises the question of whether teachers are considering reasons for their struggles, or if they are just accepting the status quo as the way things should be and accepting blame for how they feel as their own.

The highly bureaucratic nature of many schools is said to cause much frustration for teachers. The words of the mother teachers indicate frustration with Principal Smith and her expectations for them. It is interesting to consider that even though Principal

Smith is female, she mirrors the patriarchal expectations of the hegemonic institution which she represents. Ely (1995) expresses the tendency for this to occur with women administrators in any organization: “When the more powerful positions in organizations are filled almost exclusively by men, organizations’ standards for success are likely to reflect characteristics stereotypic of men” (p. 594).

Patricia comments about her frustration with Principal Smith who frequently wants her to make changes to the master schedule, a responsibility that isn’t even in her job description: “Sometimes I just get so frustrated. I mean, we’re not doing anything. Anything we try, we don’t try long enough to see if it’s going to work . . . And so it’s very, very hard. It’s hard on everybody” (I3857-3858, 3910). Kendra is overwhelmed with the amount of grading that she is required to do and her inability to get it all done before she leaves school in the evenings.

> And I’m thinking, are they thinking that someone has to put numbers on all those papers? You know, that’s a whole lot . . . It’s a whole lot of work that I have to do at home because I refuse to stay past 4:30 p.m. (I1122-1124,454-455).

Laura feels weighed down by expectations for her as a teacher and comments that she doesn’t think that these are fair.

> I think it’s unfair . . . because of the results oriented society that we have I’m supposed to show that the kids are doing better. I’m tired of shoving objectives, or whatever I need to do to get them where they need to be . . . I really don’t like so much pressure. I thought the pressure is just for the people in the corporate world, but then you are in this atmosphere and you feel the same (I957-958, 944-947).

Although the participants’ words about their frustrations were concise, as they described their struggles I noted that instead of allowing their criticisms to stand on their own, they tempered these by making comments which seemed to indicate a willingness to accept blame for the situation in which they found themselves. Patricia comments:

> It seems like I’m complaining, but that’s really not the case. I know that a lot of my frustration lies in my attitude. Sometimes I just get tired and frustrated and

> need to re-adjust my thinking by concentrating on the positive side of the situation (I1820-1821).

In our interviews Kendra would frequently conclude a not so favorable comment about how she perceived a situation by stating: “And so that was an issue that I had to get over” (I405-406). For example, she claims that she “got over” her guilty feelings for leaving her children at day care, she “got over” feeling like she was being over touched in the classroom, and she “got over” being upset about having to take work home in the evenings (I344,373 and 410, 406, 354). As for Laura, who generally was the most outspoken of the three women, she too, surprisingly accepted blame for her frustrations at school. After explaining how upset she was for being reprimanded by not only Principal Smith, but also one of the curriculum coordinators for the school, she comments: “I think I put so much in other places that I shouldn’t have. Maybe I misplaced my energies. . .” (I2083-2084).

It seems that the women, rather than being willing to search for reasons for their unhappiness by asking questions about who might be responsible for making them feel this way and consider how the situation might be changed, prefer instead to submissively accept responsibility for their struggles, and, in this manner, avoid calling into question the status quo.

EXAMINING THE CONTRADICTIONS

The tensions and contradictions which are highlighted in the descriptions of the participants’ lives point to a reality that is completely different that that which they initially claim. According to their assertions, these women love to mother and teach, believing that these two jobs blend well together. They also say that they have supportive and understanding husbands and that their struggles with school are due to administrative demands for them which they are able to overcome by dividing their lives into spheres of

responsibilities. Not having read descriptions of their lives, one might believe these seemingly plausible assertions. The problem is, once the women pause to take a breath, they release a flurry of examples which indicate that they do not love to teach, their mothering responsibilities are overwhelming for them, their husbands are unresponsive and unsupportive, their idea to divide their lives into boundaries has failed miserably and made it even more obvious to them that their lives are unevenly balanced and to top it off, they sense that it's no one's fault but their own.

In this next section I will seek to understand why the women in this study had such completely different interpretations of the realities of their lives. I will do this by first examining how the profession of teaching has been socially constructed. I will then move on to examining the social construction of motherhood. Using an understanding of how these two roles for mother teachers are constructed in mother teacher's lives as a foundation, I will seek to explore what happens when these two oppressive, patriarchal discourses co-exist in women's lives and how the discrepancies in the mother teachers' descriptions of their lives fit into this phenomena. In conclusion, I will make suggestions for application of the ideas suggested by these findings.

Teaching as Socially Constructed

Teaching has emerged from within a patriarchal societal structure (Cannella, 1997). Just like mothers, teachers are expected to socialize "their" children on behalf of a dominant group whose values and goals they do not determine (Lightfoot, 1978). Martin writes about how education is thought of as casting off "attitudes and values" traditionally connected with domesticity" (1994, p. 234). Maher describes this education as a developmental journey that children take from the starting point of the home and family (the feminine) to the public sphere of education (the masculine) (1994). Female teachers are expected to prepare children for citizenship in male society (Sunnari, 2003)

by teaching male values of competition, solidarity, and physical prowess through emotional, supportive, relational, and nurturing means (Abbey, 1995). Kendra's struggle with this is revealed when she explains: "On one hand here I am giving all these hugs and attention to these kids, and on the other I'm checking off whether they have mastered objectives so that they can test well. It doesn't seem to make sense" (I1523-1524). At the same time, mother teachers appear appreciative of teaching having been constructed as a job for women (Bilken, 1995). Patricia says: "Teaching- it's just a good job for moms . . . I'm proud of being a teacher and enjoy being a mom . . . I have no real complaints" (I3786, 1916-1917, 3786).

Expectations for teachers are embedded within institutional understandings of gender. As previously described, in this research I draw on Bilken's definition of gender as referring to "the predominant practice of characterizing men and women in relationship to each other" (1995, p. 2). As I shared in a prior section, Laura appears aware of this practice when she talks about how a male recently received the Bilingual Teacher of the Year award.

> For example . . . about choosing the bilingual teacher of the year . . . They had only three nominees- one of which was a man who is brand new to the profession- he's not certified, and HE was chosen! . . . I think . . . they chose him, because he's a man . . . I have no proof . . . but that's how I feel. They must have some kind of authority that we don't have. I don't understand it (I928-929, 931-938).

The use of the educational institution for the reinforcement of gender ideologies has been occurring since the nineteenth century (Walkerdine, 1992 cited in Maher, 1999) when women were first permitted to teach, and remains one of the major social forces shaping education today (Connell, 1985). Underpinning the power structure of schools is society's association of power with masculinity (Connell, 1985). Laura relates to this when she describes how she sees schools as male driven and male empowered institutions. As previously quoted, Laura mentions, "Schools are all about controlling

bodies. I really think it's a male concept. Because it's always been like that. Males have always been in power" (I926-927). Gender in schools is reproduced through "culturally constructed relations of power, produced and reproduced in interaction" between males or their female representatives, most often administrators, and the women, most often teachers (Gall, 1991, p. 176).

Not only are schools gender regimes, but their power remains unquestioned. MacKinnon describes how the idea of male dominance is kept in place with the concept of gender difference. She clarifies that gender is not difference, but rather hierarchy. Cannella reinforces this concept of gender as hierarchy when she writes:

> Patriarchal perspectives have so dominated the west that male control over females is accepted as universal for societal order. Unstated gender assumptions are so prevalent western mental constructs as to be invisible (Cannella, 1997, p. 139).

Friedman (1985) describes how these assumptions have become so embedded in the psychic of women and how the patriarchal norms have been internalized. "As for the woman- teacher, she has been subject to socialization to femininity from birth" (p. 207). Jilk describes how the system "tells teachers that they should be adhering to well-structured schedules, keeping test scores up, and maintaining immaculate records" (2005, p.5). Instead of questioning such expectations when they disagree or have concerns, mother teachers often choose to avoid confronting administration by adopting a policy of silence and not upsetting the patriarchal function of schooling (Gilligan, 1983). Kendra believes that it is better to keep her concerns to herself, rather than risk upsetting Principal Smith. As previously quoted, Kendra says, "We're here for the principal. She's the head. Even if I have concerns, I try to keep them to myself. She needs good team players and that's what I want to be" (I4156-4158). The status quo is not to be called in to question; if teachers disagree with the dominant regime "they are taught to blame their

own intellect, motivation, or effort" (Cannella, 1997, p.143). A I have already shared, Patricia gives a prime example of how teachers, instead of blaming the status quo, blame themselves:

> It seems like I'm complaining, but that's really not the case. I know that a lot of my frustration lies in my attitude. Sometimes I just get tired and frustrated and need to re-adjust my thinking by concentrating on the positive side of the situation (I1819-1821).

The discourse of professionalism has evolved within the patriarchal notion that teachers and students should yield to and support the "male controlled" world (Cannella, 1997, p. 143). The discourse of professionalism simply seeks to maintain the status quo by fostering the patriarchal notion of control. Cannella describes how this can be seen in how a teacher spends her day: "We now find teachers spending their days writing lesson plans, creating learning centers and units, grading stacks of papers, covering skills, and evaluating students" (1997, p. 147). The teachers are so busy fulfilling expectations in these areas that "The knowledges that would be created through their own lives, imaginations, and creativity are denied" (Cannella, 1997, p. 147). Kendra struggles horribly with trying to live up the patriarchal expectations for her as a teacher.

> . . . trying to plan for all these subjects and grade for all these subjects, and keep up with books and papers and workbooks for all…it's too much. And I don't enjoy that part of it at all. The logistics of it are horrific. (I3242, 3252, 2034-2044).

A desire to be "normal" and a willingness to judge themselves, and others as "abnormal" has turned teachers into "docile bodies managed by outside powers and judging their own worth by the standards of those forces" (Cannella, 1997, p. 149). Most important to the discourse of professionalism is that the identities of women as good mothers, gendered workers, good daughters, and as agents of the state are accepted as truth (Cannella, 1997). Teachers do not feel empowered to question these discourses. Whether they agree with them or not is not important, they are accepted as truth and they

construct themselves based on these unquestionable "truths" (Cannella, 1997). It is important to note that teachers not only judge themselves based on these expected identities, but also feel empowered to judge others based on these same standards. Again, Kendra states:

> I don't really compare myself to other teachers, but sometimes it just can't be helped. Especially in the case like on my team where comments have been made that I'm snooty. I'm a good teacher and I'm a good mom. I just wonder if the same things can be same about those people who spend their time judging others (I1540-1543).

Thus begins the circle of mother teachers looking around to judge other mother teachers based on standards that they didn't set, ones they would likely not even agree with were they to be closely examined- the same standards and expectations that cause them grief in their own lives.

Rather than recognizing that the discourse of professionalism has resulted in other mother teachers experiencing similar struggles and challenges, these women are limited to seeing only the struggles in their own lives. Isolated from, and often in competition with, each other, in an effort to meet societal expectations for them, the mother teachers interpret their struggles as shameful and something to be hidden from their colleagues. This has a two fold effect. The women are prevented from being potential sources of support for each other and their efforts to hide their struggles and live up to expectations results in a bolstering of the very ideologies that are causing them hardships.

Motherhood as Socially Constructed

Motherhood is a social construction. Culture tells us what it means to be a mother, what behaviors and attitudes are appropriate for mothers, and how motherhood should shape the relationships and self-identity of women. The roots of the patriarchal family

that provides a foundation for the gendering of our society (Dalton, 1999), can be traced to the rise of Industrialization (Dally, 1983). Previously, mothers, fathers, and children worked side by side in their homes and on their land as there was no firm concept of mother as caretaker of children and the home until industrialization and urbanization split domestic life into two spheres – one public for the Father and one private for the Mother (Thurer, 1994, Kaplan, 1992).

Bernhard (1974) writes about how the concept of mother shifted and how she was now "idealized and gentle and loving and her main goal was to make a home for her family" (cited in Kaplan, 1992, p. 12). This romanticized impression of the omnipotent mother leads mothers to being idealized as the "epitome of feminine fulfillment" (Oberman and Josselson, 1996, p. 349). We see these expectations reflected in how the expectations of Patricia's husband have changed since she became a mother. Referring to a drastic change in his behavior toward her Patricia notes: "He never used to tell me what to do; now he'll try all sorts of things to get me to be home more" (I2197-2198).

Societal impressions and expectations of mothers remain frozen in time (Chodorow and Contratto, 1992). Expectations for mothers are a reflection of archaic pre-modern structures (Dalton, 1999) which rest firmly upon an antiquated notion of a "good mother" (Jetter, 1997, p. 5). Kendra senses this when she explains the pressure she feels to live up to certain obligations.

> Some days it's just hard . . . I try to make a good dinner like good Moms do with a toddler hanging on my leg demanding my attention and I feel guilty 'cause if I ignore her she doesn't stop and it's my fault . . . (I2144, 2146-2148).

Despite the fact that the "traditional family" - with its' wage-earner father and its' stay-at-home mother - has become a historical and cultural aberration (Coontz, 1992), a commitment to maternal devotion and self-sacrifice remain the foundation for society's patriarchal impression of good mothers, and the intransigence of gender roles within

families stands strong. Kendra describes the guilt and frustration she feels in the evening when her toddler acts demanding: ". . . it's my fault anyway that she's acting like a whiny baby because I choose to work. She didn't choose to have a mom that worked. That was all me . . ." (2147-2150)

As previously described, Rich refers to the clearly scripted roles for mothers as "mother manuals" (1976). Laura reflects an awareness of this when she admits: "Everyone seems to be telling me how I should act and how I should feel. Sometimes it makes me feel lost and confused about what I should really do" (WC#5). Mother manuals tell mothers not only how they should think about themselves, but also how society should think about them. Hence, mother manuals provide guidelines by which mothers are judged. Mothers not only judge themselves by these rules, but they also judge other mothers around them. Societal tendency to either blame or idealize mothers is an enormous burden of responsibility shouldered by the women expected to live up to the se myths (Oberman and Josselson, 1996, p. 349).

In conclusion, socially sanctioned systems of domination such as family, the military, education and the church maintain the patriarchal power of society (Dalton, 1999). Women must function within a society that views work and family as oppositional. Since society inextricably links mothers' conduct to their children's care and well being (Hays, 1996), gains for women outside of their roles as wife and mother are therefore seen by society to come at the expense of the children (Dinnerstein, 1992). Because patriarchy is acted out in mostly unconscious traditions and behaviors there is rarely an appeal to unfairness or contradictions in its practices (Dalton, 1999). These injustices are simply accepted as the status quo and women live their lives under the impression that their unhappiness and inability to make sense of the world is their fault. Again, Laura reflects this impression when she talks about her demotion and says: "I felt

that some way or another I was either angry or I was unacknowledged or I did something wrong in that sense" (I1776-1777).

MAKING SENSE OF THE CONTRADICTIONS: REALITY CONTINUUM

In this research study, I discovered that the lives that the mother teachers stated that they lived were, in many respects, the antithesis of how they described living the events of their day to day lives. For example, a participant's statement describing her life as mother teacher as enjoyable and well balanced was accompanied by numerous examples which indicated that this was not the case at all. This was not just limited to one particular areas of their lives. Rather, as previously detailed, descriptions of many numerous aspects of participants' lives were full of contradictions when compared against the lives they described themselves as living.

The reason for these contradictions lies in the fact that acceptable behaviors for women and teachers have been pre-determined by the status quo. Canella writes about how "Rational, hierarchical theories have been used to construct power roles, male over female" (1997, p. 138). These theories are accepted as the status quo, which in turn promote identities of women as good mothers, gendered workers, good daughters and as agents of the state (Cannella, 1997). Since these are accepted as truths by all, including subliminally by the mother teachers in this study, they are not open to interpretation. Even if the women felt empowered to question these truths, they would lack the language to describe what they're facing. By not recognizing the dichotomy in their lives, nor having the language to name their struggles, the women are prevented from seeking out more reasonable and compassionate interpretations of their lives.

After much reflection about these contradictions, I began to think about the participants' lives in terms of a reality continuum. On the far end of the continuum is the truth as they wished it, their idealized, wishful lives. This is the end of the continuum

where one would place their description of their lives as a balancing act filled with joy and satisfaction. An example of this would be when I was told by a participant that she believes that teaching is an ideal job for mothers due to its flexible nature. I refer to this end of the continuum as Idealized Conceptions. The participant really does want to believe that teaching is a good job for mothers, and when viewed in isolation, these words have a sense of truth to them. After all, since society tells us that teaching is a good job for mothers, why would the mother teachers want to question this assertion? If they do, they are accusing themselves of having chosen to work in a profession that is not compatible with mothering, and what mother would want to bring attention to this matter?

At the far other end of the continuum, we find the reality end- what I refer to as Miserable Realities. It is on this end of the continuum where one would place the mother teachers' descriptions of the day-to-day activity of their lives – and the resulting pain, tension, misery, flaring tempers, and utter exhaustion that most mother teachers hide from public view. This is where the description of how frustrating the mother teacher's life at home in the evenings would be placed. She rushes home from the kids' day care and a quick trip to the grocery store. After turning on the television for her older daughter, she tries to get dinner made and put in the oven with a fussing toddler hanging on her leg demanding attention. Wishing her husband was not out of town on business, she snaps at the toddler. The mother teacher feels badly about the situation, but is not aware of any solutions available to her to ease her anxiety and guilt.

My main concern with these two parts of the continuum is that they are extremes. As a result of hegemony having designed the lives of women as a dichotomy, the mothers teachers have only two options with which to describe their lives. They can define themselves in the only truly acceptable option as good teachers and good mothers as

described by public's conception of mothering and teaching as shaped by the discourse of professionalism and the discourse of the good mother. In this manner, they would share thoughts about their lives in terms of mothering and teaching as a blend of perfectly balanced, peaceful experiences of loving perfection (Idealized Conceptions). Or they can describe the actual misery of fatigue, frustration and disillusionment in their day to day lives (Miserable Realities) that most teachers keep hidden out of fear and shame in order to avoid being labeled bad teachers and bad mothers.

Mother teachers have no choice but to describe their lives using the language of the patriarchy. It's important to realize that it is not just that the women are unaware of another language to use, it's because this language is the only one that is currently available- to anyone. Weiler (1988) writes that in order to understand women's experiences, the "naming" of these experiences must occur. However, she explains that this is currently impossible due to the abstract and theoretical language of male theory which we use. Patriarchy denies women "the authority of their experiences, perspectives, emotions and minds" (Friedman, 1995, p. 206). Weiler (1988) calls for women to create a new language founded upon the actual lived experiences of women. Stanley and Wise also insist on the need for a new language based on actual lived experiences of women. "Our experience has been named by men . . . We need a women's language, a language of experience. And this must necessarily come from our exploration of the personal, the everyday, and what we experience- women's lived experiences (1983, p. 146).

Hence, the women in this study are forced to dwell in the land of abstract and theoretic terms and as such are obliged to describe their lives in terms of these patriarchal extremes I have entitled Idealized Conceptions and Miserable Realities. If we instead see mother teacher's lives as a continuum rather than two impossible extremes, we open up the lives of mother teachers to new possibilities of description and interpretation. The

continuum that I propose is an alternate construction to the patriarchal dichotomy that is currently the only option for mother teachers. Offering a different image of mothering and teaching allows for different language and imagery to be used to talk about experiences mothering and teaching in women's lives. With an alternate language based in women's lived experiences, mother teachers would no longer have to struggle in the realm of either Idealized Conceptions or Miserable Realities. Instead, they would be offered the possibility of negotiating new understandings about teaching, about mothering, and about these roles combined. On this continuum, mother teachers would find themselves, instead of backed up against a wall of rigid extremes offered to them by hegemony, searching out fluid, flexible approaches to the integration of mothering and teaching in their lives. These adaptable approaches would accommodate the shifting demands of the professional and personal lives of these women- a difficult pregnancy, a baby with ear infections, a weekend history fair, their child's first day of kindergarten etc., so that, as the lives of the mother teachers change, so too could the paths shift upon they choose to walk.

This continuum offers all mother teachers the possibility for a different kind of future. It is an attempt to provide them with a theory of motherteachering consistent with their needs as women "operating at the fringes of patriarchal space" (Friedman, 1995, p. 207). It seeks to allow them to break free of the web of idealized motherhood and expectations for good teachers which seek to constrain them, and instead embrace a future free of the never-ending guilt, heart breaking choices, and incessant pressures of living up to mothering and teaching within the parameters set by patriarchy.

A key aspect of the reality continuum is the concept of agency in the lives of mother teachers. All three of the women in this study were quick to point out how others- most often Principal Smith and their husbands- limited them in living their lives as they

wished. It is true the administrator and the spouses in this study were certainly powerful figures in the lives of the participants. However, the women also are party to blame for the circumstances in which they find themselves. Success of the reality continuum I propose in the individual lives of mother teachers is dependent on whether the women are prepared to give up their willingness to be told how to live their lives. They must consider not only how they believe their motherteachering lives should be lived out, but also what or who may be preventing this from occurring and take active measures to end their oppression. In addition, just as all three participants enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to speak with me about their motherteachering lives, so too should they be willing to break free from the isolation of both mothers and teachers promoted by the discourse of mothering and well as the discourse of professionalism and seek out connections with each other in order to strengthen their group efforts and support one another in this quest for change. Kaufman et al. write that in order for women to overcome current societal perceptions of women, they will likely need to band together and be seen as "aggressive and militant" rather than "compliant and long-suffering" (1997, p. 10).

To demonstrate how this reality continuum could look in the lives of mother teachers who are willing to make these changes, I have imagined the lives of the three mother teachers in this study as if they had already made efforts to recognize and reject the patriarchal dichotomy of the discourse of professionalism and the discourse of the good mother and are already living lives on the reality continuum I have proposed.

Patricia on the Reality Continuum

It has been six months since Patricia and I discussed the reality continuum I propose in this study. This half-year has not always been easy for her. As I listen to her speak though, I am confident that the path she has taken is one which is leading her

toward a more peaceful, joy-filled life. When I ask her to describe how her motherteachering has changed in the past six months she takes a big breath and exhales before she responds with a smile.

> *I can't tell you that it's been easy. My greatest struggle has been with my husband. I can't even tell you how many discussions we have had about my new attitude. I guess I never really realized it, but in the past I used to defer to him a lot in order to avoid confrontations. And to be fair, when I make my mind up about something I don't like to mess around, so this all was a pretty big shock to him. You should have seen him the first time I really stood up to him. Things have gotten a lot better though. He really seems to understand that I view my job completely different than how he views his job. I used to kind of feel that I had to hide my teaching self at home from Elvis. It was almost like if I enjoyed teaching then I must not enjoy being a Mom. That isn't it at all and I think he finally understands that. Not that we don't still have discussions, but things are much, much better. Last year, I pretty much stopped going to any evening events to avoid having to clear it all with Elvis. This year though, I've started going again- like before I had Kyle. I know you probably wouldn't believe this, but even Elvis has come to a few evening events- like when my computer club put on an animation show at the PTA meeting. That night Elvis brought Kyle and then another time I had the nanny bring Kyle up to school when it was time for her to go and Elvis had to work late. And you know what, sure, I got some strange looks for having a kid on my hip at Open House Night, but it's not like I was conferencing with parents or anything. It was just a come see the computers and what we've done night, so it was no big deal. I even had a few teachers come up to me the next day and ask me if the principal had said anything to me. She hadn't and to be honest, I've kind of gotten where I know I'm doing a good job- I doubt she'll say something, but if she does, I'll deal with that then.*
>
> *Last year I was so caught up in wanting everyone to see me as some perfect teacher and I always had to act a certain way or I'd lose this great job. But now realistically speaking, I'm not going to lose this job over bringing my child up to school in the evenings. I'm a whole lot happier than I was always looking behind me to see who might be watching. In fact, I don't think I ever could have lived up to that image I had built up in my head of how great I needed to be. I actually talked to my mom about it, six months ago I guess. I had never really realized that she struggled even one little bit with teaching and being a mom to my sister and me. She made it seem so easy I guess I always felt that if I couldn't do it, then something must be wrong with me and maybe I didn't deserve to be a teacher after all. She's actually the one who encouraged me to talk to Emil and tell him how I felt. I'm not sure if he likes the new me better or not, but in some respects he has to- before there was so much tit for tat and hidden resentment on both our parts. It felt so good to get that out and talk about how I really felt and that I was*

never going to be the mom he had growing up, and I really thought that that was okay. And he's come around. We've even started talking about having another baby. Remember how Emil didn't really want another? I think that had a lot to do with his unresolved anger at me that we've begun to address. I'll never be the mom he imagined I was going to be and he's going to have to get over that because that's not even something I want to aim for. That's just misery inducing.

As for school, I've begun to look around a lot more and see that quite a few of the teachers are just like me- we all have our struggles and battles, but by not pulling together and supporting each other we just make the battles so much worse. I feel like there used to be this imaginary checklist that said who came in when and who served on which committee and sure, I still feel like that sometimes because it's still there, but my attitude is that I'm not going to worry about it. I'm a good teacher. I know it and who cares if I leave at 3:30 p.m. a few days a week. I'm allowed to. I can't say my principal is happier though. I mean, I'm still completely dedicated to my job like I've always been, but a few times this year, I've actually told her "no" when she's asked me to do something completely outside my job description and when it would have prevented me from doing what I was supposed to be do in my job description. I was pretty sure she was going to have a heart attack when I told he I couldn't substitute one day for a class because I was going into fourth grade classrooms teaching them how to do power point presentations, but me actually putting my foot down seems to have helped our relationship. Maybe it's my attitude, I'm not sure, but she no longer seems to take advantage of me like I now see that she used to do a lot. It feels like she views me more of an equal and when I get to the point where I say "no" she knows that she's gone too far. I thought it would be scary to question her and at first I worried about what people might say, but to be honest, I just don't want to waste energy on that anymore. Looking back I can see how miserable I was always trying to be some ideal teacher and mom. Now, I see that sure, some days I'll be miserable, but at least it's not because I feel like I'm a failure as a teacher or mom. And you know what? It feels good to be free.

Kendra on the Reality Continuum

Of the three participants, I imagine that Kendra would have the most difficulty adapting her life to fit on the Reality Continuum. At the same time though, of all three of the women, I sense that Kendra would benefit the most since she seems to be completely unaware of the possibility of not living at the extremes of Miserable realities of Idealized Conceptions. I imagine how, after making efforts to adjust her outlook and life to the reality continuum we meet and she tells me about her efforts.

This has been something that I have really struggled with. I have been raised with believing in certain expectations for women and wholeheartedly embraced them. At least I thought I did. Now though, after having been pushed to take steps back and examine my life, I see that I was basically living two separate lives- one for home where I follow all those rules, and one for school where I followed different rules. I looked back I saw that I was so busy making sure that I was able to check those rules off on some good mom and teacher list that I wasn't even really living my life. That's hard to say, and even harder to explain, but that's how it seems to me. I was a mom in name and did all the things a good mom should do, but as for living the ups and downs with the kids and enjoying it, that wasn't really something for me. At school it was even more so. There we're given these lists of expectations- heck, part of my new job is making sure people fill those expectations. It seems like we're so busy checking to make sure we've done everything expected of us that we miss out on the heart of teaching. Those moments come unannounced and if you're so busy checking your list you can miss them and then they're gone forever. And those are the moments that make teaching a joy. Sure, I know that those expectations are the way things are supposed to be, and I'm not saying don't do it. But what I am saying is that it's not as black and white as I had made it out to be before. It's like I've realized that bringing the human dimension into teaching and interacting with fellow teachers is just as, if not more, important that those checklists. My principal has been more relaxed this year now that our standardized test scores went up. She and I have always been friendly and we still are. But I'm glad not to have to run after teachers anymore to check up on them for her. That just was getting to me and seemed just plain wrong. Remember how I told you I would always ask new moms how they were doing? Well, I got together with a few other teachers and we started a mentoring program to help these new moms adjust to having a baby and then help make sure they're okay once they get back into the classroom. I pitched it to the principal in the light that we might not have so many teachers not come back after their maternity leave and she's been really supportive. We've met during a staff development day and arranged for a couple of after school social events- and Principal Smith let us go right when school was out so we were still on contract time! I'm not sure if she understands how good this has been for everyone involved, but its' been nice to have her support.

It's been kind of like that at home. I used to be so worried that I wasn't doing this or that for my kids, or that they were missing out on something by me working or whatever, but taking a break and refocusing has really helped me begin to see things differently. I used to insist on the two stories a night rule. We all know that reading is good and I had better make sure I do that with her. Well, these past few months we've begun to just read one story and talk, or even just lie there in bed and talk. It's amazing how much I now know about my older daughter just listening to her talk. And now that she's in kindergarten, she has a lot to tell. I used to feel a lot of pressure to get her ready for school, but she's doing fine and I think that that time that we just cuddle and talk does both of us more good than

any reading might do. Not that we don't ever read, we do. We're a reading family, that's for sure. But I'm not so obsessed about my old 2 book rule and it feels good.

I was worried about how my husband might react to this. I've always seen him kind of like my Dad who expected certain things of my Mom. But he has really surprised me. While I used to think he expected things of me, I'm now realizing that a lot of it was things that I thought was expected of good moms- and wasn't necessarily anything to do with which he wanted. Like, he doesn't like to clean. Well, that meant to me that that was my job. But when I sat him down to talk a while back and said that I thought we maybe could use a weekly cleaning service, he agreed with me. And since he's gone for six weeks for recruiting in the fall and anyway is often gone until late in the evening, and you know I don't really like to cook, the kids and I have started to get take-out food. We have a Boston Market by our house so it's not like I'm feeding them McDonalds. We go in- the kids meals are 99 cents, you can't beat that, we eat there and if they make a mess, no big deal. They've had a good meal and then we head home for bath time. And you know what, I realized that just because I'm a mom, it doesn't mean that I have to do everything my mom did. As long as the kids eat well, who cares who stuck it in the oven?"

Laura on the Reality Continuum

When I last spoke with Laura she had decided to take a leave of absence from school to stay home with her three children. In this next section, I imagine how she describes her life when we get together for an imaginary meeting six months later.

> I tell you, Elise, it's been really good. I've used this time to find myself. I've had the free time to take some steps back and look critically at my life. This is something I haven't been able to do for a very long time. Most of all I've been able to examine my life as a teacher. I used the time when my parents were here to see a therapist. Remember, we do this a lot in Argentina. Anyway, in therapy I talked a lot about my feelings of being not in power, not in control at school. I was able to work through a lot of my unhappiness and narrow down why I was so miserable. Remember I told you last year I taught twice a week in the Writers for School Program? Well, when they called me to come teach at a different school, I was ready. I don't think I could ever go back to where I was because of my problems with Principal Smith. But things are different where I am now. It's only part time- after school, but I've also been working with some children as a dyslexia specialist so that I can keep up my training that I did last year. I feel really good about that. I even do work now at home. After how I felt last year I never thought I would do that. But I don't have a classroom to myself and actually, actually it's been a good, good thing for me. Last year I was so focused

on dividing my life up by location- it was like here I teach and here I mother. This year I can't do that since I don't have a classroom and it's forced me to get over that dividing my life up so much. My own kids see me doing my teaching work and last year where that would make me mad, that it was invading our lives, this year it just fits better. I haven't had any problems breastfeeding since I'm never really gone so long and every now and then if I work with a student late or do trainings, the principal told me that I can use this room to pump that they set aside for nursing moms. They have a bunch of moms with babies there. So that's good. And my baby is so cute. It's really been so nice to have this time with her. I missed a lot with my other two and I feel lucky to get that with her. Both of the boys are in school. Juan is in pre-k now and his older brother is in first grade. They're at the school where my husband is the speech therapist. Part of me is sad because I always thought that I'd be the one at their school, joining them for lunch and knowing so much about their school lives. And we've been talking about me maybe applying there. Since I now know that second grade is really where I belong, I feel good about that and I've been thinking about applying to their school. The school is pre-k through second grade so I'd be at the top level. It seems like that would be a good thing for me. My husband is the speech teacher, so we would not be competing or anything.

Things between us are good now. I kind of dreaded him being in schools too, but now I can see it's a good thing. The vacations off together are nice and he has been trying to see more of my stresses. That used to be kind of an issue, but I think I've been able to relax more and he's tried more to understand my feelings. So things are better and I may be ready to go back full-time next year, I just may. I miss having my school kids. I love being home, but I can see if I were at a good school with an understanding principal, I could handle teaching and mothering again. I think I might be ready- at a new school.

IMPLICATIONS

This research recognizes that mother teachers "have been socialized in a culture that has negated or trivialized women's intellect and authority" (Friedman, 1995, p. 208). It is intended as a wake up call to society in general about the dichotomy that patriarchy has created for mother teachers who are given the impossible choice of either seeking to live up to an imaginary impossible state of perfection, or accepting the reality of their lives while living a miserable existence.

The goal of this research has been to share the stories of three mother teachers who, although they were not used to freely discussing their experiences motherteachering

in their lives, were willing to do so with me. It is my hope that being able to read their about their own lived experiences in print, as well as the imaginary portraits I paint about their futures, will convince not only them but fellow mother teachers as well that they are not alone in their struggles. I hope that it will encourage them to speak out about the inequities in their lives by sharing their struggles with each other and acting as supports for other mother teachers who similarly suffer in silence.

This research study also points to new directions for study in response to the problem of high numbers of teachers departing from their teaching positions, often referred to as teacher turn-over. In a 2001 study, Ingersoll found that teacher turn-over was highly influenced by age. “The relationship between teachers’ age (or experience, in some analyses) and their turnover has been found to follow a U-shaped curve. Although there is some disagreement as to why this is the case, researchers have consistently found that younger teachers have very high rates of departure” (p. 8). There is also a lack of data about reasons for this teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). Although no statistics currently exist to support my suspicion, I believe that the possible link between teacher attrition and mother teachers and their struggles at school deserves closer examination.

Researchers such as Rutherford (1999) conducting research on a similar population have called for sensitivity from administration. Rich (1995) highlights the creation of support groups for mother teachers to assist them in their dual roles by providing a forum for teachers to share experiences of being a working parent and also by providing a network of resources and assistance (cited in Rutherford, 1999, p. 90). Dinnerstein (1992) suggests that programs such as parental leave and flex-time would greatly ease the pressures of working mothers. She asserts that such support programs would make it possible for “women to compete successfully with men” (p. 183). Although I certainly do not doubt that these changes would certainly be an improvement

of the current situations in the lives of mother teachers today, I do not believe that these superficial changes would have any impact on the most important, and underlying issue – the need for long-lasting shifts in the perceptions of mother teachers. Without examining often invisible, oppressive cultural norms for mothers and teachers, support groups, parental leave, and flex time will have little if any substantial effect upon the lives of these women. And indeed, if these strategies are attempted without examining the underlying reasons for the misery in these women's lives, irregardless of support groups, flex-time and parental leave, mother teachers will still continue to struggle. As is customary, society will once again place the blame on mothers since, having made efforts to "help" by providing support groups, parental leave and flex time and yet the mother teachers still fail, there is no choice but to assume that the fault lies on the part of the mother teachers.

With this research, I hope to have revealed that the struggles of mother teachers are far from something that they brought upon themselves, but rather that their burdens are due to societal imposed expectations for them in both their roles as mothers and teachers. As things currently stand, mother teachers are held tightly in place by not one, but two, leashes around their necks which control their every move as both mothers and teachers. As mothers they are dominated by the discourse of the good mother and as teachers they are dominated by the discourse of professionalism. In isolation, either set of these very similar rules are difficult to meet, but combined as with the jobs of mother teacher, these leashes pull in opposite directions, making for an effective choke collar.

In this research study I have exposed the contradictions in the lives of mother teachers. I have designed a continuum that points out the dichotomy in the lives of these mother teachers. The women claim to live their lives on the end of the continuum which I call Idealized Conceptions. This is the end that entails the expectations for both mothers

and teachers as determined by the discourses of the good mother and professionalism. But the reality of the women's lives indicates that this is not how their lives are lived. Instead, the mother teachers dwell in the land of Miserable Realities, locked into the daily grind of getting kids dressed and ready for day care, feeding them breakfast, dropping them off at day care and driving to school, serving early morning duty, preparing students for standardized tests, teaching objectives, attending meetings, running errands, picking children up from day care, driving home, starting a load of laundry, cooking dinner, eating dinner, giving baths, reading the obligatory good night story, cleaning the kitchen, transferring wet laundry to the dryer, beginning on the next day's lesson plans and grading papers only to head to bed and begin the whole process over again the next morning.

Dwelling on either end of the continuum doesn't allow for any back and forth movement between the two end points. This is why the concept of these women's lives as continuum is so valuable. The continuum eliminates the either/or of oppositional and impossible extremes of Idealized Conceptions and Miserable Realities and offers them the ability to reject living in either end of the continuum and instead choose for themselves, at any point in their days, where on this continuum they wish to dwell. Having recognized and rejected patriarchal expectations of Idealized Conceptions as an unrealistic, impossible choice for them, they are free and empowered to make these choices and, since each choice will vary depending on the woman making the choice, where they stand at any point in time on the continuum will differ as well.

This continuum is so much more powerful that support groups, flex time, and parental leave could ever provide because it empowers women to reclaim their lives as their own. Once women are able interrupt their deep seeded impression of needing to reach some imaginary, impossible state of perfection prescribed to them by society and

refuse to accept the status quo and live difficult and miserable lives, they can move forward. Once this has happened, support groups, flex-time and parental leave could be options that would surely have beneficial effects upon the lives of these women since they will be coming from a completely different vantage point and will approach these options with completely different lenses than ones tainted by patriarchal expectations.

Imagining policies and procedures to put in place for mother teachers has not been the goal of this research study. Rather, the goal has been three-fold. Through this research I first seek to encourage all persons in education- mother teachers, other teachers, pre-service teachers, administrators, teacher educators, etc. to recognize the dichotomy that mother teachers face of a daily basis and acknowledge the impossibility of this situation. Second, I would like to these people to acknowledge how both the discourse of good mother and the discourse of professionalism force us to reinforce this dichotomy through policing whether we are all living up to these standards. Third, I call for conversations about these oppressive circumstances and discussions about how we can begin to resist and dismantle this situation.

This surely is not an easy endeavor. It requires not only recognizing and resisting translucent patriarchal structures but also a willingness to engage with principals and husbands who benefit from the very structures the teachers mothers will be calling into question. The teacher mothers in this study have taken the first step toward recognizing and rejecting the hegemonic oppression of them as mothers and teachers . Although they lack the words to identify what is making them miserable, by honestly sharing their struggles and misery, albeit unconsciously, they have taken one baby step in the direction of reclaiming control over their lives. My imaginary projections of their lives have taken the next step on their behalf.

This research however, is not only applicable to women who are mother teachers. This knowledge has much to offer not only the field of education, but all women in general. The women in this study all blamed themselves for their unhappiness. In reality though, it was not their actions or lack thereof, which resulted in their unhappiness. Rather, it was their inability to recognize that patriarchal expectations for them as mothers and teachers were making them miserable. The knowledge that these feeling of guilt and helplessness are not their own fault should be life altering for the women who have been oppressed by these expectations. All mothers, regardless of whether they are employed for pay outside the home or not, must negotiate the divide of societal expectations for them with how they are best able to meet these expectations.

The ability to recognize these expectations as what they are- unfairly ascribed hegemonic demands on women- has the potential to allow all women to actively seek to disentangle themselves from these patriarchically imposed expectations and encourage them to free their minds to think about what they truly believe might be best for themselves and their children. This freedom to reject living their lives in a manner ascribed to them to society also frees them from the guilt induced consequences of knowing that their lives are lived in a manner completely opposite that that which is expected of them by society.

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